

RPG REVIEW

Issue #12, June 2011



***History Special: Historical RPGs Theory
and Practice ... Deadlands ... Wild Fields
... Realistic Biology ... England 1680-1730
... Fusting BASH UE ... Druid Spells for
Hero System ... Cunning Cohorts ... Thor:
Movie Review ...***

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ADMINISTRIVIA

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EDITORIAL

Well, here it finally is, the most late of all RPG Reviews! There is no need for me to trot out the various excuses of a busy life of post-graduate study (did I mention I've finished my MBA?), more than full-time employment, numerous other projects and my gaming hobby, They all contribute and frankly, RPG Review does receive a lower priority. A challenge now exists on whether I can complete the thirteenth issue with a little over a month to spare!

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Historical, or more particularly historical fantasy, has always been my preferred genre in this hobby and it has brought me some delight to introduce this issue. I remember with great fondness playing RuneQuest Vikings, an AD&D campaign set northern Europe in the “dark ages”, a follow-up D&D3.x set in the Balkans, playing Bushido with Ainu characters dealing with racism, or a homebrew during the period of the Principality of Transylvania. I cannot begin to describe the variety of GURPS games set in various points in history, especially in a current time traveller game, from the historical takeover of the Aztecs, to the Ice Age, to the the American gothic literary scene. In each and every one of these games and others, astounding opportunity and inspiration has been provided to learn something new.

My own contributions are three, being a wide (but alas, not very deep) overview of the theory and practice of historical roleplaying games, which I am sure neglects many favourites. At least for my own part, I've managed to neglect those that I dislike as well! The second contribution consists of a RPG story that I'm currently participating which uses modified Pendragon rules but covers the entire period from the Roman invasion to that of the Normans, as expressed in the boardgame Britannia. Finally, a review of Deadlands, a historical-horror roleplaying game that is still deserving of more recognition.

On a similar note we are very fortunate to receive an article by Adriano Kuc referring to the most popular Polish language game, Wild Fields, whose selected art contributed significantly to this issue. It is absolutely marvellous to discover that European cultures are making games based on their local knowledge of history and mythology.

Contributor and occasional editor Karl Brown provides three articles in this issue, two related to the theme being Medieval Professions for Tunnels & Trolls and an overview of England in the late 17th and early 18th centuries for his own game Gulliver's Trading Company. His third article is a response to part of the last issue's Realistic World Design. I have some concerns with this piece, mainly its lack of empirical (actual), rather than rational (possible), evidence. Still, I am sure many can find value in it as a speculative elaboration on what was already provided.

Another regular contributor, Michael Cole provides a interesting attempt to shoehorn AD&D druid spells into 4th edition Hero System, to make an attempted conversion from two popular but rather retrospective systems. Still, we do always insist on at least one retro article per issue, and this one's it. One a similar but more contemporary line of “fusting”, Dr. Samara does an excellent job at fixing (as he sees it) some of the design and terminology issues in BASH UE. Finally, we have a guest article from John Four from the long-running newsletter Role Playing Tips on how to give NPCs a bit of life and background.

Regular contributors Andrew Moshos and Wu Mingshi give their usual excellent material as the first and last standard articles of each issue, being industry news for the latter and a movie review for the former; this time the mighty Thor!

As mentioned, I have just over a month before the next quarterly – which again gives an idea of how late this issue was. With a theme on d20 and it's friends encouragement is sent out for any out there with an article, scenario or review to send them in post-haste.. Who know, I may even get this rocky 'zine back into some sort of proper timetable!

Thanks for your patience!

Lev lev@rpgreview.net

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LETTERS

My name is Adrian Borejko from south Poland. Im lead popular blog in Poland GRY FABULARNE <<http://gryfabularne.blogspot.com/>> (en: role playing games) dedicated to pen & paper role playing game, since 2005 year. Previously I wrote scenario and articles for polish magazines about RPG: Portal (Portal) and Magia i Miecz (Sword&Sorcery), Kwart (Quart-about historical RPG) etc. I play in RPG almost 25 years and i remember the beginnings this hobby in Poland.



GRYFABULARNE.BLOGSPOT.COM

Currently I am looking some information about role playing games in different corners of the earth. I would like to ask you for information on how you look at a hobby, not many people in the game and the games are so popular? I'd be very interested on information about your game by which you created in the your country. I would appreciate if you could me send more information. If it were be not possible, please sent me link where i find more information about this topic.

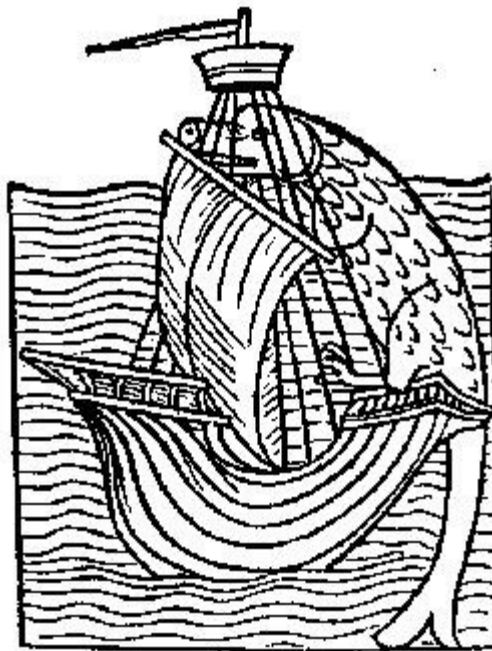
Thanks in advance for yours reply.

Regards.

Adriano Kuc

e-mail: borejko@gmail.com

WWW: GRY FABULARNE <<http://www.gryfabularne.blogspot.com/>>



Hello Adriano,

The roleplaying hobby in Australia is quite large, especially considering its population. Major conventions like Arcanacon have run annually since 1983 with hundreds in attendance each year. It is argued that LARPing started in Australia at this convention, under the Australian title of "Freeform roleplaying". GenconOz in 2009 had a few thousand people in attendance, although that covered various card and computer games as well.

All major cities have several clubs, conventions and gaming stores, although the latter have shrunk somewhat with the increasing dominance of online purchasing. Over the years there have been several attempts to develop RPG magazines, the most successful being Breakout!, which also covered wargames, from 1981 to 1991 and Australian Realms from 1988 to 1996. The excellent online magazine, Places To Go People To Be, ran from 1998 to 2008.

Over the years a small number of roleplaying games have originated in Australia. Some, like "Super Squadron" (1984), "Battlemaster" (1988) and "d4-d4" (2004) are pretty standard in their genre (in the latter example, even as "generic" system). Others however are quite inventive in terms of setting, system and style. The rules-light and "Hunter Planet" (1986) proposed a world where aliens visit earth to hunt the native wildlife, i.e., humans. Albedo (1988), presented a hard SF setting albeit inhabited with anthropomorphic animals - a theme followed up by the author with Lace and Steel (1989), a romantic and swashbuckling fantasy world analogous to the European 17th century, but with humans, centaurs and a combination of dice and cards for even resolution, which was certainly innovative at the time.

Less well known are smaller press games like Soothsayer (1997), which was designed as both generic and narrativist, Tonio Loewald has self-published a number of games with a hard sf orientation, such as "Foresight" (1986) and "Hindsight" (1987), the historical and simulationist "Rus" (1989) which set in Russia circa 900AD just at the coming of Christianity and finally Gulliver's Trading Company (2011) which uses a variant of FATE/FUDGE to provide a good set of rules for a game with some serious scalar differences. There have also been a number of Australian writers, which a significant contribution to Chaosium publications; Richard Watts (Call of Cthulhu, Elric!), Mark Morrison and Penelope Love (especially for Terror Australis for Call of Cthulhu), Michael O'Brien (various RuneQuest publications during the Avalon Hill period). In addition there is Stephen Dedman (Villains & Vigilantes, various GURPS supplements), Wes Nicholson (contributions to several AD&D supplements), Steve Darlington (contributions to Warhammer FPG supplements). I wouldn't be doing myself any favours if I neglected my own contributions which included a Companion for Rolemaster and a chapter in Fox Magic.

It is, of course, difficult to discern what are the most popular roleplaying games in Australia lacking the sort of national inclusive organisation (like SVEROK in Sweden). Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence based on personal observation is that roleplaying in Australia does not diverge too far from international expectations of the Anglophone world. Dungeons & Dragons and its variants is of course dominant and has been for decades. RuneQuest and Call of Cthulhu had a flurry of popularity, especially in the 1980s, with Warhammer and the White Wolf line both having a high level of popularity in the late-80s and early-90s, the latter especially in the LARP scene. From personal observation it seems that the roleplaying hobby in Australia is quite healthy with both quite a range of new players and grognards prepared to experiment with a wide range of systems whilst maintaining old favourites.

Hope this helps!

Lev

Industry News

by Wu Mingshi

Hosei Bo Mr. Lev,

Maybe you do double issue instead of single and come on time, lah? Always so slow like drive on grandfather's road No mind, Mingshi has plenty of news that excite reader. But first news that excite Mingshi - D&D perfume! Black Pheonix Alchemy make race, class and alignment perfume. Mingshi want chaotic good halfling rogue all mix together! OK, that almost \$80... Maybe nice reader send Mingshi a present?

I know you like RuneQuest and Glorantha, so I have three item of news. Mingshi like Glorantha too, especially duck with plum sauce. First Mongoose no longer do Mongoose RuneQuest II and change name to <s>Wayfarer</s>Legend RPG. Now The Design Mechanism say new RuneQuest VI will release in 2012. Third news is new edition of King of Dragon Pass coming soon, and will be available on cell phone too! Maybe Mingshi play from Little India to Sembawang to Little India again.

Our friend at Cubicle 7 very impress with pretty box called The One Ring, you think another game about Hobbits and Elves and Middle Earth, lah? Also in great tradition Set 2 of Dragon Age is release this quarter by Green Ronin. Maybe these games win award, like Origins. Origins Awards number 37 see Dresden files win lots, best roleplaying game and Dresden Files (Our World) win best roleplaying supplement. Cthulhu Dice Bag win best accessory. Something for Mingshi to store D&D perfume in!

Happy birthday Little Fears! Now ten years old, and special edition release, so congratulations on ten very scary and strange years. Innocence stat go down now Very strange that Munchkin ten years old now as well. Maybe Little Fears expansion for Munchkin for party?

So you do historical special this time? Maybe like steampunk game Brass & Steel from Pamean Games in different 1905 with magical industrial revolution, and clockwork with steam-powered prosthetics.

OK, that's all for me this quartering!

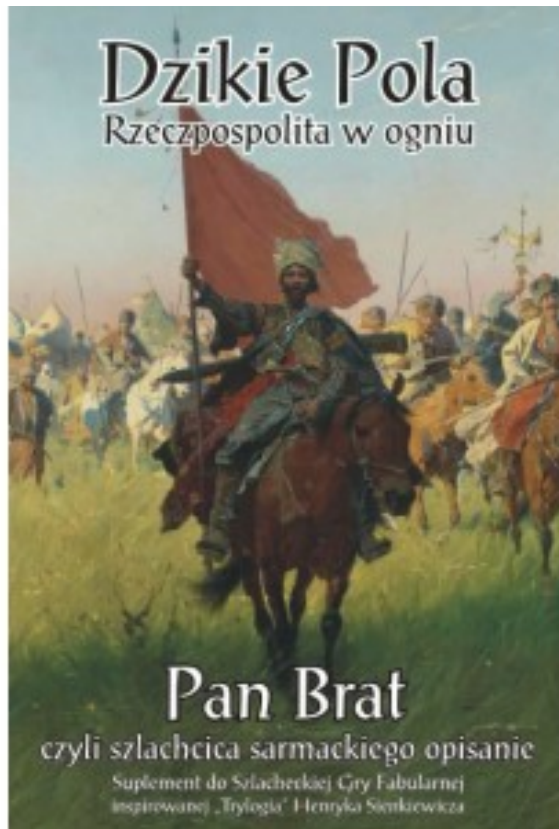
Love,

Mingshi Wu, mingshi@rpgreview.net

Dzikie Pola Review: Wild Fields

by Adriano Kuc

Dzikie Pola (Wild Fields) is a Polish role-playing game, set in the historical setting of the 17th century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It had two editions: first in 1997 and second in 2005.



History.

The first edition of the game was released in 1997. Its authors were Jacek Komuda, Maciej Jurewicz and Marcin Baryłka, and there were two expansions: *Stepie szerokim* (In the wide steppe) and *Ogniem i mieczem* (With fire and sword). The second edition of the game has been released in 2005, and its authors were Jacek Komuda, Michał Mochocki and Artur Machlowski. The game is only available in Polish language and is one of the most popular role-playing games in Poland. The second edition rulebook contains long and extensive sections describing the historical setting of the 17th century Commonwealth, some of which are presented from the viewpoint of contemporary storytellers, others resemble a modern encyclopedic entries.

Setting.

The game is set in the historical setting of the 17th century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Players characters are the Polish nobility (szlachta), and most of the adventures are set in the turbulent, south-eastern region of Zaporizhzhia (region known then in Poland as 'Dzikie Pola', today mostly in Ukraine). It's the twilight time of the Polish Golden Age, with looming destabilization of Golden Liberty and government sliding into anarchy due to magnates plots and mounting serfdom-related tensions, especially involving the Cossacks. Conflicts between numerous nobles, duels and increasing internal unrest are common themes, while magic is rare (and depends on how far the gamemaster wants to move away from historical reality).

Mechanics.

Dzikie Pola second edition has its own unique game mechanic, based on the d20 die. There are no die rolls needed during the character creation. Player characters abilities and skills are simply bought for set amount points. Hit points are not dependent on advancement level (each character has the same number of wounds he can take before dying) and character advancement is fairly slow, making it a more realistic than heroic system. Player characters are usually those of Polish nobles, but foreigners are also permitted. Some of the abilities or (dis)advantages are unique to this historical setting, like playing with a character sentenced to banishment or infamy, a fake noble, a newly ennobled character or a character with an official title.

During the game, tests are made with a simple d20 die roll, modified by testing characters' attributes, skills and other situation modifiers. If the roll is higher than the difficulty level, the action is successful. Most of the mechanic is dedicated to the combat system. Game has mechanics for both the m  le combat and firearm combat, but it is the former — with szablas (a Polish type of a sabre) or rapiers (used mostly by foreigners) — that most rules are dedicated to. Players can use more than 30 different moves during combat, and thus at the time of combat, especially between experienced players, the games takes on an almost tactical flavour.



Official homepage DZIKIE POLA <<http://valkiria.net/?area=8>>



Theory and Practise of Historical Roleplaying Games

by Lev Lafayette

What is the purpose of historical roleplaying? Arguably it is the same as historical research itself, albeit that is a discipline that has fallen in interest in recent years. History gives us not just the opportunity to learn of the sequence, but also an understanding of the mentality of the time and place, which hopefully will provide predictive and warning capacity as well. As the great (and sadly often ignored) philosopher George Santayana said: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Karl Marx, in one of his many ironic predictions was even more insightful; history repeats "... the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce."

It is perhaps then in the interest of avoiding farces that participants in the shared imaginary space of the roleplaying game has the opportunity to experience the tragedy in a manner that is deep, educational and immersive. Some knuckle-draggers of course oppose such an agenda, claiming that roleplaying games exist solely for 'fun', a statement which has as much validity as a teenager who wears their pants falling down and their arse hanging out because it is 'cool'. 'Fun' of course comes from the old English 'fon', to befool, itself meaning to 'to lose flavour'. This should provide more than a vague hint of the problem; whilst it may provide some instant gratification in the longer run it is unsatisfying. Instead better objective is 'enjoyment'.

By illustration comparison can be made with the usual alternatives to historical roleplaying, that is fantasy and science fiction. Both provide an enormous outlet for creativity, as Herbert Marcuse pointed out: "Phantasy provides a most decisive function in the total mental structure: it links the deepest layers of the unconscious with the highest products of consciousness (art), the dream with the reality; it preserves the archetype of the genus, the perpetual but repressed ideas of the collective and individual memory, the tabooed images of freedom."

The problem is, many expressions of this unconscious are thoroughly juvenile in narrative, full of Mary Sue characters, and improbable settings. Even some of the greatest literature of the relevant genres show a complete lack of serious consideration of social and technological development; thousands of years pass in Tolkien's middle earth with no serious development in either and in Isaac Asimov's Foundation and Empire social development goes backwards to a premodern, predemocratic state. Needless to say, stagnation and reaction has expressions in numerous other instances by far lesser writers.

The suspension of disbelief in such circumstances is only possible for a limited period of time; such settings, plots and characters lack verisimilitude and they show a lack of consideration for the Other (call them orcs or call them aliens the outcome is the same). In contrast a study and implementation of history in roleplaying games encourages not just dry realism, as is obviously expected, but also a greater sensitivity to the flow of time and the viewpoints of other cultures. In other words, a grounded knowledge in history provides a more satisfying fantasy or science fiction story as well.

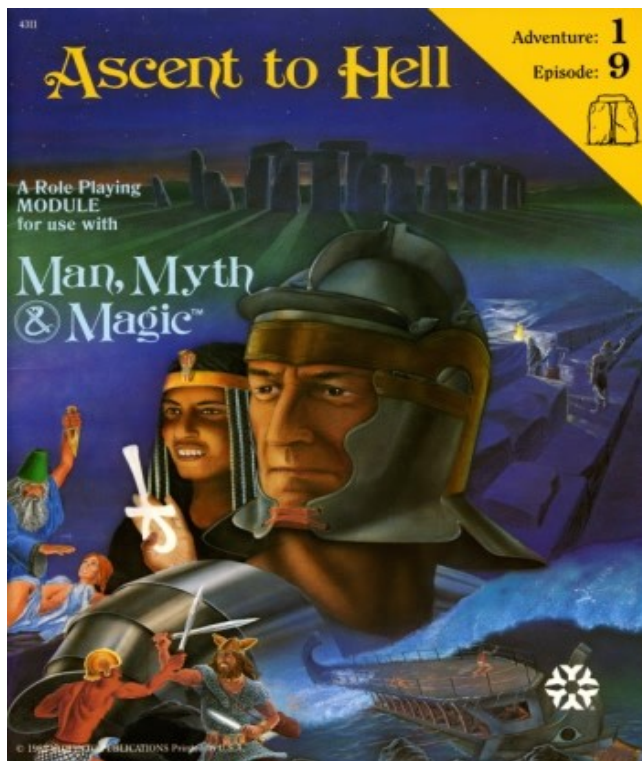
The alternative however, as the Marcuse quote suggests, is not to simply adopt just the cold reality of history, the bare bones. To be sure, historical roleplaying can be played in this manner. But when the magic, the speculative, the mythic, is taken away the experience also loses some drama. A significant part of the reason for this is that roleplaying from the viewpoint of secular modernism in either a historic or even future environment distracts from the immersive

experience; people in the past simply did not think like we moderns do, and - in all probability - nor will they in the future. It is actually worthwhile incorporating magical, alien or other similar fictional devices that are contextually appropriate to improve actual play. Almost needless to say, avoid temporal and spatial anachronisms like the plague, unless they make a very interesting and water-tight plot device.

Enough of theory - how have historical perspective been implemented in actual roleplaying games? It is unavoidable of course that this article can only give a limited review of the material that has been produced and even among that material. Nevertheless it is hoped that the following can show how genuine improvements have been made in the hobby that incorporate the theoretical perspective offered above. In attempting to illustrate this four very broad historical periods of RPG games are identified; (a) the earliest historical games, including Chivalry & Sorcery, Bushido, Land of the Rising Sun, Pendragon, and Man, Myth and Magic (b) the historical supplements found for Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, early RuneQuest, Call of Cthulhu, Rolemaster/Fantasy Hero, GURPS, and various d20 supplements (c) Ars Magica and the White Wolf line, and (d) contemporary 'narrativist' historical RPGs.

Chivalry and Sorcery, Bushido and Land of the Rising Sun are worth considering together, not the least because they come from the same publisher, but because of similarities between the game system (C&S and LotRS are almost identical, Bushido is very similar to Aftermath!) and their strongly simulationist creative agenda, which included not only simulations of physical reality but also of social circumstances. In C&S, for example, the section on Knights also included such aspects as courtly love, political influence, managing fiefs and tourneys. Another significant innovation

at the time was that characters received experience points for engaging in activities relevant to their profession. However to describe C&S and LOTRS as 'difficult' to play is generous, with a combination of table-based references and complex equations it suffers from an lack of systematic consistency common in first-generation RPGs. In contrast Bushido, retained all the depth of C&S and LOTRS however (indeed, arguably more) had a much more consistent and comprehensible system. For what it's worth, LOTRS must receive mention for being perhaps the first game where you could randomly roll a tree as your starting character; although a spirited tree, it must be said.



Pendragon and Man, Myth and Magic make interesting comparisons not only because they were contemporary to each other but because of the some rather significant differences in game design. Firmly based on the legendary approach to the period of Arthurian Britain, Pendragon had an easy and extremely consistent system, where passions and personality traits (as appropriate for culture and religion) used very similar mechanics were at least as important as skills and combat. In contrast MM&M - which also, it must be said, used quite consistent

mechanics - included a minimal skill list with a very strong combat orientation. The all-encompassing random generation of nationality and class also meant that adventuring parties were often decidedly silly; it would not be unusual, for example, to see an African Witch-doctor, an Oriental Zen Lama, a Roman Gladiator and a Greek

Philosopher travelling together. There was only the most minimal approach to involve character personality in accord to appropriate cultural norms often built into special abilities which were smacked of stereotyping (Hebrew merchants received a bonus for bargaining for example).

By the mid-1980s a distinctive shift was taking place in historical roleplaying. Rather than individual games for each setting a feather was being taken from FGUs cap and generic systems were being published with individual supplements. RuneQuest (3rd edition) was a leader in this regard with two high publications, Vikings and Land of Ninja, both of which only required minimal changes to the core game system whilst incorporating a great deal of well-referenced contextual information. Taking a longer draw of the bow, I will also include Call of Cthulhu and its supplements as historical roleplaying withing the same game-system family. CoC of course paid great attention to setting and characterisation and incorporated into the system features appropriate to the temporal psyche.

For Rolemaster and the Hero System, both being published by Iron Crown at the time, followed suit with a series of genre books; Robin Hood, Mythic Greece (where you play demigod level and higher!), Vikings, Pirates, Mythic Egypt, Outlaw/Western Hero, At Rapier's Point and Arabian Nights. Of the collection, Mythic Greece, Pirates, Vikings and Outlaw were particularly well done whilst Mythic Egypt was a valiant attempt, but the scope was simply far too great. For Advanced Dungeons & Dragons (2nd edition) there was an excellent collection of supplements including, in publishing order; Age of Heroes (Ancient Greece), Celts, The Glory of Rome, Charlemagne's Paladins, Vikings, The Crusades, and A Mighty Fortress. These books provided an excellent and dense introduction to each with an outline of historical fact, daily life and mores, and sample scenarios. Further, they provided excellent examples of how an apparently strict high medieval roleplaying system, such as AD&D, could be modified through restrictions and kits, to fit a wide variety of historical situations. If a criticism is to be given to these supplements - and all are recommended - is that they are relatively 'soulless' with the mythic and fantastic elements too strictly differentiated from the historical and prosaic.

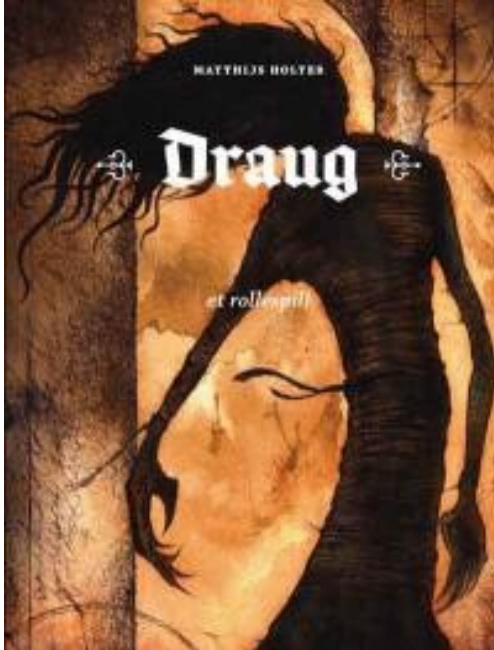
Despite these publications one could not help but think that TSR had missed this market. Steve Jackson's GURPS in particular sought very high standards by combining a highly realistic yet playable game system with an emphasis on reality-checking and the use of real-world units. This provided the opportunity to produce some excellent high-quality relevant generic sourcebooks; from the historical perspective High-Tech, Low-Tech and the almost forgotten GURPS Ice Age are certainly among the best supplements ever produced and are certainly excellent sourcebooks for other game systems. The scope of the particular historical sourcebooks is also quite notable; GURPS Egypt, Greece, Celtic Myth, Imperial Rome, Robin Hood, Middle Ages I, Aztecs, Japan, China, Swashbucklers, Age of Napoleon, Scarlet Pimpernel, Old West ... With such a variety it can only be expected that quality varies, as does focus. It is not surprising that in some instances the sheer scope of a setting made particular applications difficult - to describe GURPS China sensibly requires several sourcebooks, not just one. The GURPS game system also provided an opportunity to integrate cultural mores into individual characters through the advantages and disadvantages system.

Whilst specific historical sourcebooks were not produced by WotC specifically a number of third-party organisations made various attempts, some good, some bad. Avalanche Press produced adventures and settings for The Last Days Of Constantinople, Greenland Saga and Vlad The Impaler, each of which were features some quality historical research matched only by utterly inspid adventures and gross characterisations. These are all best avoided unless picked up at a bargain bin. In contrast Mongoose's OGL Ancients is solid in style and substance and, very much unlike the aforementioned publications, well integrated into the particular game system. Finally, attention is drawn to Testament, the Biblical-era roleplaying game. To say the least the authors did an excellent job of incorporating history and mythology into this supplement and into the game rules, such as a delightful set of curses as well as including character motivation within the narrative through flaws.

Two of the most well-known RPGs with a historical setting are *Ars Magica* from 1987 and now into its fifth edition and a number of supplements from the White Wolf line, including *Mage: Sorcerer's Crusade* and *Vampire: Dark Ages* from the mid-1990s and from 2002 onwards *Dark Ages: Werewolf*, *Dark Ages: Mage*, *Dark Ages: Inquisitor*, and *Dark Ages: Fae*. Setting-wise two of the game lines are European late-twelfth to early-thirteenth century, the exception being *The Sorcerer's Crusade* which is set between 1400 and 1500. Both games come from a common design-base (Jonathan Tweet designed the original rules with Mark Reign-Hagen who went on to start the White Wolf line) and have a similar in-game factional competition. Further, the third edition of *Ars Magica* was also published by White Wolf, which included a "Realm of Reason" (in addition to the divine, the infernal, the fae, and magic). Whilst fitting in with the White Wolf line (cf. *The Sorcerer's Crusade*) it aggravated a number of *Ars Magica* grognards and has been dropped in subsequent editions.

The *Ars Magica* House and Tribunal system is obviously fictional the use of Latin nouns and verbs does provide some medieval style, not to mention a clever game mechanic. It is a far cry however, from even a minimal social simulation of the practise and belief of magic in the European middle ages, of which a number of scholarly books are readily available. Despite this *Ars Magica* has some justified reputation on providing material which is historically accurate with attention to cultural perspectives, even if these are not strongly integrated into the game system. In particular one can refer to *Blood and Sand: The Levant Tribunal*, written by a professional historian, specialising in the Islamic middle ages. A particular feature of that text (as opposed to the supplement *Mythic Europe*, for example) is a very clear distinction between historical fact, cultural mores and game-setting specific information. This provides an effective method for those who wish to use such supplements as a popular history without confusing the information with *Ars Magica* the game.

The final group of historical RPGs considered here are contemporary narrativist and independent systems. *Grey Ranks* in particular serves a pivotal example, set during the Warsaw uprising of 1944 with adolescent characters. Another example is *Draug*, historically set in the early 19th century Norway, but with the inclusion of Norwegian horror-fairy tales. With a lesser direct tie to history, *Dogs in the Vineyard* is roughly analogous to the Mormon State of Deseret (*Deadlands* will receive its own review this issue). These games tend to be rich in setting and characterisation and usually include an in-built narrative trajectory and tension; typically they do so with a loss of simulation and scope.



By way of conclusion, the strength of historical roleplaying is to provide a deeper level of satisfaction to entirely fictional settings in addition to gaining a more prosaic knowledge of setting-specific history and culture mores. The inclusion of historical roleplaying has been part of the hobby since its inception and will undoubtedly continue. A problem arises when particular games do not concentrate on incorporating the cultural attitudes to characters, leading to the anachronism of contemporary characters in a different setting. The incorporation of fantastic elements can also be problematic if care is not taken to differentiate between fantastic and historical elements. Finally, it is essential to remember that natural history itself does not have a narrative structure; this must be imposed by the storyguide in

order to give a literary sense. Considering the range of material available overall a series of historical supplements from the mid to late 1980s are still the high point of the historical roleplaying.

Britannia-Pendragon

by Lev Lafayette

with assistance from Michael Cole, Doug Brook, Rodney Brown and Miriam Rayment

Between the two of them Britannia and Pendragon represent perhaps the best products for representing the 'dark ages' of British history, Britannia representing an approach from a strategic boardgame approach and Pendragon for roleplaying. Designed by two major figures in the industry, Lewis Pulsipher and Greg Stafford respectively, both have received very high recognition by fans and critics alike, including several editions, multiple publishers and awards.

Following a number of sessions of the strategic boardgame, the question arose on whether the roleplaying game could be incorporated in the experience. After all, Pendragon explicitly designed as a generational RPG? Is it therefore not possible to expand the scope from the period of Arthurian legend to encompass the period from the Romans to the Normans? Not being the sort of people to shy from such opportunities, we decided to give this a shot. The following represents a summary of some of the issues we encountered in the process which will make things easier if others too decide to engage in this rather interesting combination.

1. History: Actual or Simulation?

The first issue we encountered was whether to use real history as a general guideline, or whether to use the history as generated by the Britannia simulation. If one chooses the latter it is, of course, imperative that the game play of the boardgame is actually recorded. If the former is chosen one had better start swotting at this period of British history (the period is, as Pulsipher points out in his designer's notes, absolutely fascinating).



The problem with both methods is that avoiding a sense of contrivance is necessary for a good roleplaying narrative. An uncertain future, the capacity for player characters to make a difference, a sense of spontaneity. All of these are

necessary features in roleplaying when are lost when one strictly follows an existing plotline, whether real or fictional. Strictly following the Arthurian legend (as is done in supplements such as "The (Great) Pendragon Campaign", "The Boy King" etc) is not recommended for these reasons.

The alternative is to use both real history and the historical simulation as a guide for interesting effects. There is no need, for example, to include the generational grinding wars between the Broche ("Caledonians" in Britannia) and the Picts in the highlands of Scotland. A very radical change would be the survival of the Brigantes from the Roman invasion and their subsequent dominance (as has happened in two games), and unless a narrative is built around this significant historical deviation it is perhaps best ignored as well.

A middle point, which we found most workable, is to use the results of the simulation to add to the historical story in a manner which does not radically alter historical expectations but does for interesting variations. In one game of Britannia for example a group of "Belgae" (a rough term for a number of south-eastern pre-Roman tribes), escaped to The Fens where they remained for the entire game - this highly inbred tribe occasionally leading raiding parties when their marshland population grew too much. This event provided additional interest to the narrative and remained within the bounds of historical plausibility.

2. Technology and Society: Real or Mythic?

There are very substantial differences in technology and society between the actual historical period that the Britannia period covers and the Pendragon roleplaying game. The former only describes technology in the strategic sense and assumes minimal change in the period; for example, whether or not a particular tribe has seafaring capacity. The Romans, of course, receive the advantages of their limes and roads, however this is a temporary technological advantage. Various forces (Romans again included) have a military advantage, an abstraction of superior tactics, weaponry, or use of mounted troops.

In contrast Pendragon is a mythic story written in the high middle ages, referring their ideal and society imposed on a distant past. Even if one follows the barely more historical *Historia Regum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth in preference to the *Lais of Marie de France* or the *Le Morte d'Arthur* by Thomas Malory, this still applies. In Pendragon the technology and society of the Arthurian legend follows the narrative of the story; it starts off in a fairly miserable state, but with the rise of Arthur, and the introduction of chivalry and fine amour, standards of living, aesthetic finesse, beauty and craftsmanship grow. When the Round Table collapses, so too do these standards.



A Britannia-Pendragon GM is thus faced with this dilemma; do they adopt a "simulation" of the early middle ages, a very grim place or do they adopt the "narrative" approach? If the former is chosen, some fairly significant changes will be required to the standard Pendragon price list. "The Boy King" and "The (Great) Pendragon Campaign" both make recommendations for restrictions in this regard of the first period of the legend. Armour and weaponry would be extremely limited (forget about plate, two-handed swords and crossbows). If the latter is chosen, then the GM has to decide to what extent the Arthurian mythology is incorporated. In our case, we chose that the craftsmanship etc., was part of a period of magic and legend - and faded away when Arthur's rule came to an end.

3. Glory and Time

The traditional Pendragon campaign is a multi-generational story that takes up approximately 85 years of historical time. The Britannia-Pendragon story takes up almost 1000 years. We found this makes some substantial differences between the way that characters are engaged. Typically, the game runs more like a typical roleplaying adventure group over a dozen sessions and one to four adventures before moving on to the next generation. Pendragon is not really designed for this sort of story; it is more based on the idea of a year-by-year narrative of a knight, their rise to lord, the management of their lands and family etc, and, of course, their quest for glory. Indeed, it is far from unfair to suggest that Britannia-Pendragon does not include much of these unique features of the Pendragon game.

Glory, in Greg Stafford's view, can be used a measure of reputation. On his own Pendragon website, he suggests a Knight has 1,000 Glory, a noble with 2,000 is respected among his peers, one with 4,000 is known in a homeland region as one of the best, one with 8,000 is famous throughout Britain and is probably a member of the Table, and one with 16,000 is known even in foreign lands. However questing for such recognition is not typical in our experience or the style in which we ran the game. Another form of motivation was required for Glory and glorious deeds and to provide this we turned to a narrative solution - for every 100 points of Glory, a PC could modify a die roll by plus or minus one.

Ordinary knights, without the motivation, luck or oversight that a player knight has, naturally get less Glory. How fast is their advancement? Starting player knights are vassals, and I'll use of them as the comparison. Knights start with 1000 Glory. Regular Annual Glory: One ordinary event (10), 3 Traits over 15 (50), Manor (6) = 66 One-time Events, over lifetime: Marry (500), witness great events, (25x4), 3 small battles (300), Tournaments, hunts, etc. (100) = 1000.

I will assume a lifetime of 45 years as a knight (i.e. dies at age 65), or $45 \times 66 = 2970 + 1000 = 3970$, which I'll call 4000.

So the average knight dies with 5000 Glory, Notable in his home region. He would have become "Proven" at around age 40.

As an alternative, a particularly brave GM with a very tight-knit group may wish to consider running the entire Britannia-Pendragon campaign in the Pendragon style. They will need to keep in mind that this requires at least 1000 turns of year-by-year management of activities, plus adventures. Assuming one game session per week, an averaging one year per session (some would have several years per session, some adventures could take several sessions), this

would take roughly twenty years.

4. The Grand Narrative or Episodes?

The choice between a narrative or episodes always exists in any roleplaying campaign, but becomes particularly clear-cut in something of the scale in Britannia-Pendragon. It is far from unusual in a normal Pendragon game for characters to go through four or five generations of characters. Whilst Pendragon can be run as an episodic game in this time frame, it is usually considered richer to also engage in the narrative of the period of anarchy, the rise of Arthur, the height of the realm, and then the decline.

The main difference between the Arthurian Pendragon and Britannia-Pendragon is the continuity issue. Pendragon generations are typically continuous whereas in Britannia-Pendragon it is more typical for the characters to have "stories their (great)grand(father, mother) told" as their source of information from previous generations. Such sources mean that the grand narrative, if it is used, feels 'stretched' with the temporal distance between characters.

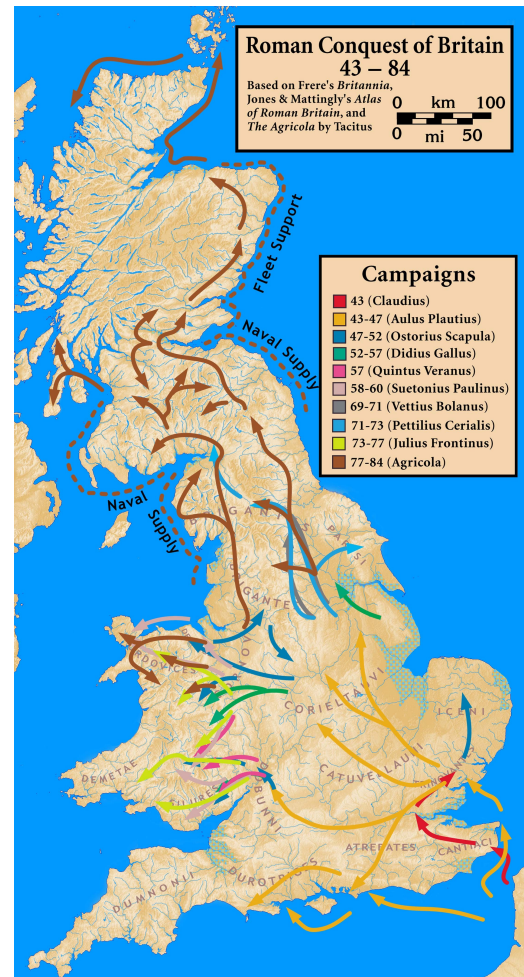
A greater challenge is finding something to hang the overall narrative one. Typically a story will require consistency in characters, themes, with various motifs being used throughout. This is difficult in a 1,000 year long story as the characters will change, circumstances will seriously challenge a consistent theme or motifs. One which we found useful - and which fits in very nicely with the Arthurian version of Pendragon - is the use of the Holy Grail, transported by very early Roman Christians to the British Isles.

Potential Campaigns Prior to the Normans

1. The Roman Invasion. In 43AD Claudius invaded with 4 legions with 20,000 soldiers and a like number of auxiliaries. In the next forty years they conquered first south and eastern England and then northern England, made serious incursions into Wales, and eventually into southern Scotland. It also had to Boadicea's rebellion in 60 and rebellion of Venutius of the Brigantes in 69 as Rome suffered internal turmoil as four powerful general vied for the position of Emperor. .

2. The Eagle of the Ninth and The Revolts.

The northern reaches of Roman Britain proved to be particularly rebellious; Hadrian found need to build a defensive wall (122) and briefly extended north under Antoninus (142), but then deserted with when the Brigante's revolted (155-157), then recaptured within a year, then abandoned around 164. Whilst a large fort was retained a



Newstead and smaller outposts, these were overwhelmed in 180 with the breach of Hadrian's Wall, despite the arrival of some 5,500 Sarmatian cavalry in 175. The Pictish revolt was put down, but the Roman soldiers in Britain proved to be rebellious, overthrowing governors, marching on Rome to demand the execution of Prefects and so forth.

An interesting tie is to place the search for the Eagle of the IXth, a legion which may have disappeared in northern Britain c120 in this period, and as fictionalised by the famous adolescent stories by Rosemary Sutcliff in the 1950s

3. *Emperor Albinus*. In 193 there was no less than five emperors. When Petranix was assassinated, Didius Julianus took his place - but three others had a different idea including Clodius Albinus, who was declared emperor by the legions in Britain and Hispania. For his own part, Albinus supported the claim of Septimius Severus, thinking that he would succeed him. When it became clear that Septimius had other ideas, Albinus declared himself Emperor in 195 - but was defeated at an extraordinarily bloody conflict at Battle of Lugdunum (Lyon) in 197 two equally matched forces of around 55000 to 75000 each side. Ironically, as a result of the battle the Roman forces in Britain were severely weakened and some thirteen years later Severus would die as the result of an uprising in York.

4. *Carausius The Restorer*. Of humble Belgic origins, Carausius was given command of a fleet to protect the Chanel from Frankish and Saxon pirates. When suspected of keeping pirate treasure for himself the Western Emperor Maximian (Diocletian split the Empire in 285) sentenced him to death. In response, Carausius declared himself Emperor, establishing a strong force in Britain and northern Gaul. An attempt to invade Britain in 289 by Maximian failed forcing a peace treaty. Carausius considered this legitimacy and began minting coins bearing his head with the legend Restitutor Britanniae (Restorer of Britain), Genius Britanniae (Spirit of Britain), and Expectate veni (Come long-awaited one). Increasingly messianic he proclaimed a new Golden Age. In 293 he was driven out of Gaul by the new Emperor Constantius Chlorus, but before he could face another invasion he was assassinated by his treasurer Allectus.



5. *Invasions and Heresy*. Despite facing numerous Pictish, Scottish and Irish raids the West Roman Empire was disintegrating with invasions by various Germanic tribes. In 410 After Honorius apparently sent letters to the cities of Britain telling them to fend for themselves, the same year that Alaric's Goths sacked Rome. The following decades were chaotic with numerous local warlords fending off foreign invaders, especially Saxons, Angles, Frisians and Jutes, resulting in numerous Britons fleeing to contemporary Brittany. During this time a Christian heresy initiated by the British monk Pelagius took roots on the isle, arguing that humans had the capacity for good and the responsibility for sin (and hence, there was no Original Sin). As a popular local heresy, it also created a source of violent conflict.

6. *King Arthur*. Whilst the historical authenticity of King Arthur is open to much dispute, especially given how poor records were at this time, it is of course necessary for a Pendragon-Britannia game. There are numerous potential candidates for this figure, however the central message is very clear; a

British leader arose to confront the Saxon invaders and won a decisive victory at the Battle of Mons Badonicus which is of unknown location and indeterminate time (c490-517). The outcome was so serious however that the Saxon incursions ceased for some decades.

7. *The Gregorian Mission and the Synod of Whitby.* In 596 Pope Gregory the Great sought to convert the pagans of Anglo-Saxon Britannia to Christianity. Over the next fifty years - the last missionary died in 653 - they managed to convert a small sections of southern Britain. It was not an easy task; starting with forty missionaries in Kent, they managed to convert the local king, Æthelberht, by 601 and expand northwards. But there was a pagan resurgence after his death in 616 and even London was free of Christians for a while. Æthelberht's daughter, however had married the king of the Northumbrians, and he converted in 627. Except that region returned to its pagan ways in 633 when the King died. Ultimately the missionaries failed with only Kent remaining thoroughly converted by 653. Notably there were also significant conflicts between the missionaries and the existing Celtic Christian Church. This would come to a conclusion at the Synod of Whitby in 654, where the King of Northumbria decided to adopt the Roman interpretation and rituals rather than that of Celtic Christianity.

8. *Æthelred of Mercia.* Æthelred, King of Mercia from 675 until 704, invaded Kent within a year of his coronation, destroying the city of Rochester. Four years later, he defeated the Northumbrians at the Battle of Trent. A deeply pious individual, he made many land grants to the Church. His wife, Osthryth, was the daughter of a Northumbrian king whom the Mercians had been in conflict with. She was murdered in unknown circumstances in 697, and in 704 Æthelred abdicated to become a monk at a monastery which he had founded with his wife where he lived for the remainder of his life.

9. *The Viking Age.* In 793 a series of omens were seen in the land of Northumbria including "excessive whirlwinds, lightning storms, and fiery dragons" and a "great famine", all preceding the first major Viking raid which pillaged and destroyed the the abbey church at Lindisfarne. The following year there was a Viking attack on Iona, and a year after that a series of raids on the northern coast of Ireland. Establishing bases on that coastline, the Norsemen, launched more raids on Iona, including a slaughter of the Culdee monks in 802 and razed the abbey to the ground. Four years later it



was raided again with another 68 monks killed. Over the next few decades there were numerous, smaller raids especially in the north of contemporary England and Scotland. It is quite possible they were involved in the disappearance of the Picts as an independent kingdom in 858 with King Cináed; according to legend Cináed was the first king of the Scots.

10. *Alfred The Great:* Alfred the Great, King of Wessex from 871 to 899, is the only English monarch to be called the epithet "the Great". This is on account of his resistance against the Danes; when taking the throne of Wessex, all other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms had fallen. A lifetime of attacks, counter-attacks, tributes, close escapes, and eventual siege forced the Danes to surrender and convert. After this Alfred engaged in tasks such as the rebuilding of the city of London, building a line of defenses, and gained significant power over the other kings of England. Danes again attacked in 892, but were repulsed, with the previously built fortifications, or burhs, having significant effect along with a highly organised militia army of fyrd. Alfred was also responsible for developing a naval force, writing a legal code, engaging in taxation reform, educational initiatives and sent correspondence and diplomats to Jerusalem, Baghdad and India. Finally, Alfred provided the foundations for the formation of the Kingdom of England in 927.

11. *King Cnut the Great.* Of Danish and Slavic descent, his father was Sweyn Forkbeard, King of Denmark, his mother was the daughter of the first duke of the Polans. As prince of Denmark, he acquired the throne of England in 1016 and then ascended to the Danish throne in 1018, making

Denmark and England one Kingdom. Combining the two lands in custom and trade, Cnut also engaged in military endeavours in Scandinavia, Cnut claimed the crown of Norway in Trondheim in 1028, which he held for seven years and the Swedish city of Sigtuna which he held for four, from 1026-1030. At this stage he would call himself, quite accurately, "king of all England and Denmark and the Norwegians and of some of the Swedes". Ensuring good relations with the Church he is recorded as being a wise and pious king, although he was known to keep two wives and was particularly harsh and cruel to his fellow Christian opponents, neither of which would seem appropriate.



Some Concluding Remarks

The period of the British invasions is certainly one of the richest periods of history to choose as a roleplaying campaign, however most roleplaying systems do not engage in sufficient effort to describe the psychological features that make up characters of the time (whether real or imagined). Pendragon does this admirably through the system of Traits and Passions, through the bonuses acquired from religious strength and chivalry.

Despite also being orientated towards a multi-generational narrative, the Britannia-Pendragon still requires a great deal of planning due to the timescale. Whilst Pendragon remains to this day the game with the greatest detail on this period, the highly episodic nature of the campaign also means that perhaps different games systems can be considered for different generations; GURPS Low-Tech, RuneQuest Vikings, AD&Ds Celts, Charlemagne's Paladin's and Glory of Rome, and Harnmaster being potential examples. This model would work particularly well if a multi-GM model to allow for individual GM preferences.

DEADLANDS: THE WEIRD WEST ROLEPLAYING GAME; A REVIEW

by Lev Lafayette

In 1996 Deadlands took the Origins Award for Best Roleplaying Rules and Best Graphic Presentation for a Roleplaying Game Supplement, which is the sort of thing that perks up one's ears, The product itself is certainly quite impressive, a well-bound hardback featuring a cadaverous character with twin six-shooters, and a logo which indicates the twin genre orientations; horror and western. The game comes with a good table of contents, but no index, some fairly good black and white art with full-colour supplements, average page layout, poor headings (thin black text with grey boxed background) and a somewhat chatty text expressed in a western style and some rather annoying prurient humour.

All told there are twenty chapters which are unsurprisingly individually quite short. The order of things is a brief introduction to the setting followed by character generation, stuff, action, setting and advice on running the game. The book has three parts; "Posse" including character generation and action, "No Man's Land" for restricted characters like priests, shamans, hucksters, and the undead, and "Marshal's Law" which is for the Marshal (GM) only. Deadlands uses the standard set of dice, appropriately entitled 'bones', but it also uses poker cards and poker chips.

The setting is an alternate timeline game where a group of indigenous Americans ("Injuns") held a ritual for not-unexpected reasons during Gettysburg in 1863. This ritual, The Reckoning, opened a nice conduit to the spirit world some some critters could come back and give some friendly advice on the presence of European folk on the red man's territory. Thirteen years later, the Confederate and the Union are still slugging it out which the addition of "critters" all over the place. In the process a large portion of California had a close encounter with the sea creating a coastline known as "the Maze". The main action is set not in the far east coastline or anything like that, but in the much more earthy disputed territories of the west; California, Utah, Colorado, Oklahoma and Kansas.

One of the nice in-game features is how the Reckoners gain additional power when they bring Fear (with a capital F) to the population and if they gain additional power they can cause more FEAR and.. well, you get the picture. Pretty soon people are completely paranoid and terrified. The designers clearly know a thing or two about RPG design and have not just left Fear as an item of colour, but have added it into the game system itself. To counter this, it is also suggested that the mighty PCs do a bit of "tale tellin'" when they defeat the Reckoners and thus reduce the fear level of a community. Not only that, but when the Fear level of a community is reduced, the PCs also gain a "Legend chip", a legacy, which allows a bit of history to be brought back into the story. Further, as the PCs face and defeat supernatural critters, they also gain Grit, a measure of their resolve and a bonus to tests of fear and terror.

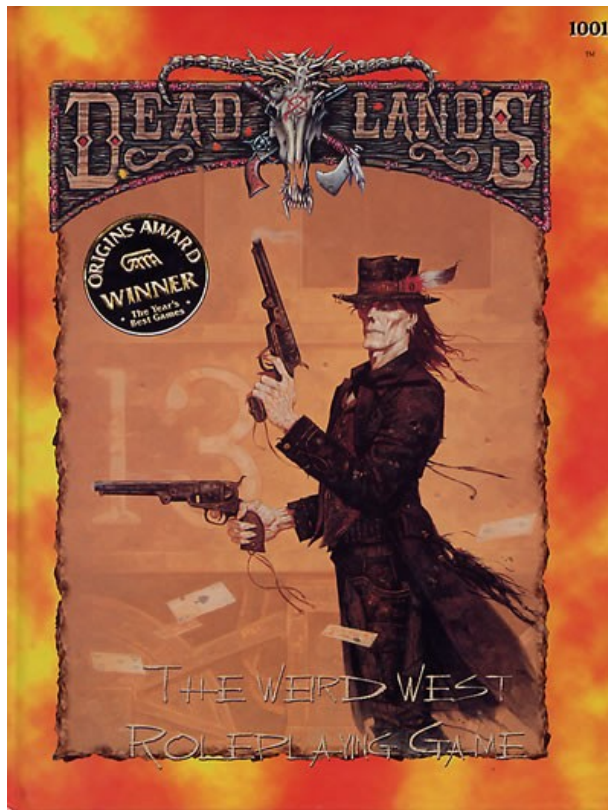
Characters are defined by Traits and Aptitudes; a group of PCs is referred to a "Posse". The former consist of attributes split into mental traits (Cognition, Knowledge, Mien, Smarts and Spirit) and corporeal traits (Deftness, Nimbleness, Strength, Quickness, and Vigor). These are rated in die value, for example Strength d6, Vigor d8 etc ranging from d4 to d12. Aptitudes represent skills and knowledges are a rated as a number, starting at 1 to 5, which indicate how many Trait dice to roll. Finally there is Coordination which is used on basic Trait tests, which function like Aptitudes, Die results are based on the highest number rolled from the pool, seeking to achieve a Target Number, however you can also 'Ace' a roll, by rolling the highest possible value and making it open-ended. For every five points rolled above a Target Number a raise is scored, increasing a degree of success. If die rolls all come up 1's, a critical failure is scored, called, "going bust".

Character generation begins from a variety of suggested backgrounds appropriate to the setting; bounty hunters, greenhorns, gunslingers, preachers, saloon gals, teamsters etc. Trait and Coordination generation is random, based on draws from the poker deck. Unsurprisingly, jokers are “wild cards”. Starting aptitudes are determined from a pool from the character's knowledge, smarts and cognition. In that time-honoured tradition since *Champions* in 1981, characters also receive Hindrances and Edges. A short chapter on Gear is followed by a range of pre-generated character archetypes to pick from if in a hurry.

Action (typically combat, naturally) occurs in five second rounds with actions determined from a Quickness test and Action Cards. The base target number for shootin' things is 5, but with quite a collection of appropriate modifiers. There is also options for a variety of special maneuvers such as called shots, fanning, dual pistols and the like. Stray bullets mean something as well with specific rules for bystanders (with the caveat that nobody is innocent). A section on fightin' (as opposed to shootin') covers fists, knives, whips and lariats. Assuming a hit occurs in either situation the next rolls determine location, again with delightful names such as guts, gizzards and noggin. This may cause variation in damage; for example as the “Bleedin' & Squealin'” section explains, a hit to the noggin causes two extra dice of damage, all relative to size. Each location can take five wound levels, from light to maimed. You don't want a maimed noggin. There is also a range of rules for “more pain and sufferin'”, including the essential drowning and falling. After all this you're probably well prepared for the section of healing, with the degree of damage referrin to a difficulty.

The game also includes a little item called Fate Chips, with each PC drawing three randomly from the pot at the beginning of each session, with the Marshall drawing three for all other NPCs. Depending on the value of the chip, these can be cashed in to negate wounds, regain wind, add bonus dies to Trait tests for example. They can even be

traded with other PCs, albeit at a cost. Bonus chips can be acquired instantly through roleplaying Hindrances. Also included in this chapter is Bounty Points, which establishes the rate of improvement in Traits, Coordination and Aptitude based on successful story development and varmint bustin'.



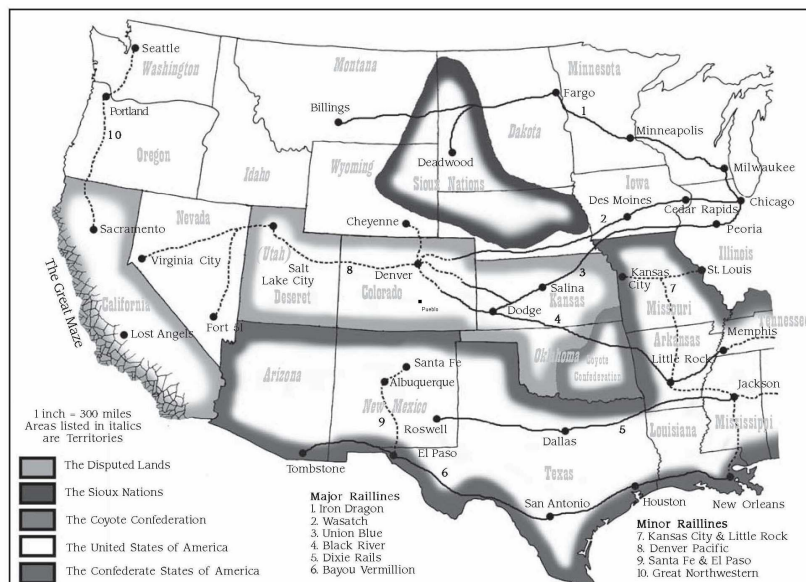
There are four chapters for special characters including Hucksters (card-based magicians who cast hexes), Mad Scientists (with steampunk style gizmos powered by possessed earth), The Blessed (who can invoke miracles, depending on their Faith), and Shaman (who can call upon spirits, appease them and ask favours). These particular characters are so much more interesting that the standard PCs is not unlikely that players will be grasping for the opportunity to play these characters, leading to some very interesting intra-party conflicts. Many of these abilities are derived from a combination of die-rolls for target numbers and card hands, poker style, for effect.

Another character possibility that would make some skin crawl is the opportunity to play an undead zombie-like being, the harrowed. Apart from not smelling too good, not looking too good, and scaring the horses, the

harrowed do have some advantages, such as the ability to resist quite a fair whack of pain and the ability to slowly regenerate from serious wounds. One becomes one of the harrowed when a Reckoning spirit decides to move into a recently deceased body, so that is a possible character quirk as well. "I'm in two minds about this" takes a literal meaning. True to popular legend, the best way to kill a zombie is with a head-shot.

The chapter on running the game provides a couple of useful hints. For starters there's a quick notation scheme for NPCs, because PCs are quite well detailed. A coloured chip system is suggested for general wounds on NPCs as well. However there is precious little on running the game especially in terms of the particular style, although a little of this can be gleaned from simply the style of the text itself. There is a rather good collection of "Abominations", which serve as a sort of Monster Manual for Deadlands, with about as much descriptive text which, in this case, is actually appropriate (I mean what are you going to do, talk to one of those things?). There is also little in terms of the alternate history except for that which is directly related to the "weird west" aspect. The Civil War apparently continues, but there isn't that much discussion about how it's developing or the status of slaves etc. Unfortunately, the game lacks even an adventure seed or two to get one started as well.

Despite these remarks, Deadlands has been a very successful game, and for good reason. In addition to winning the aforementioned Origins awards, it has also won several others from quality supplements, including a wargame and a card game. The variety and style of the game system is particularly admirable, paying attention to just enough randomness, providing a good dose of system options for a player to attempt multiple ways to achieve their ends, and there's even just enough storytelling components for the narrative-minded crew. Whilst these core, original edition, rules are certainly satisfactory and playable, they have undergone further editions, including a revision in 1999, the release of a d20 Deadlands system in 2001, a GURPS Deadlands also in that year, and a Savage Worlds Deadlands: Reloaded in 2006. In roleplaying, it would seem that this sort of imitation is the most sincerely form of flattery.



(Map by Ivar, from the Campaign Builder's Guild Wiki)

Medieval Professions and Skills for Tunnels & Trolls

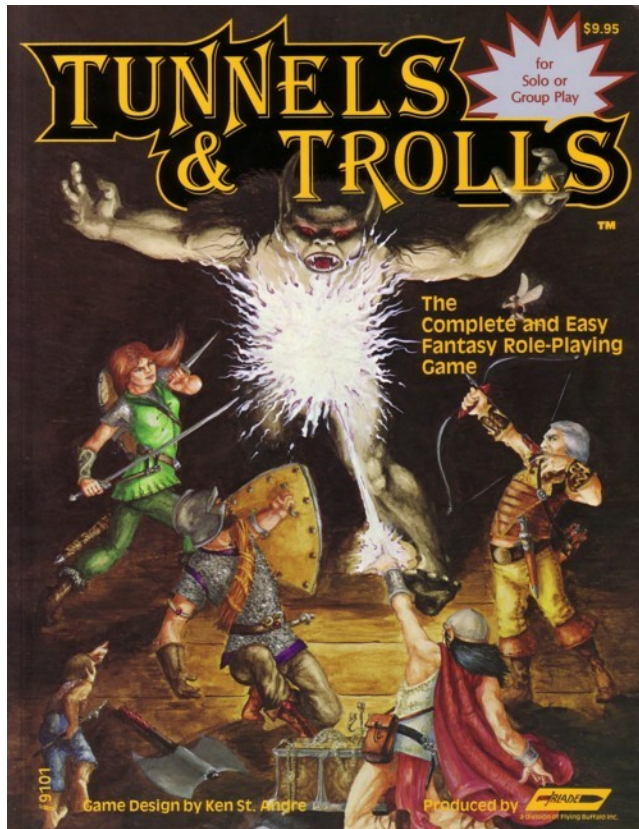
by Karl Brown

This article provides an alternative method of handling the optional skills rule for T&T version 5.5. This article replaces the skill rules given in Appendix 1 of the core T&T book. It modifies Chapter 3.4 of the core T&T 5.5 book providing a method of differentiating characters without creating new types (classes). Players of other games set in a late-medieval period may find the professions covered by these skills a useful inspiration for character concepts or as aspects in FATE games.

Language Slots

All characters can speak one language (their native tongue) at no cost. Characters with 12 or less intelligence get one slot rather than zero. The rules for Wizard's Speech (telepathy) have been modified, see 'Magical & Unusual Skills' below.

Obtaining and Using Skills



Skills can be taken in place of languages (see 3.4). The skill rules in the appendix to the core rules are not in use. Abilities such as jumping, hiking, tightrope walking, picking pockets etc. remain the purview of attributes but for these tasks that everyone may attempt the referee may allow a character with an appropriate skill and 'familiarity bonus' lowering the saving throw by one level. Most skills cover broad areas of knowledge or are related to professions eg. lawyer, naturalist, or connoisseur. That skills are so broad keeps the rules simple and allows most character concepts to need only one or two skills to cover all the knowledge the concept might need. More limited skills would result in great long lists of skills here and on your character sheet that need more careful definition. A skill lets you do a task but the chance of success is based on an attribute. Most characters are not literate, cannot swim, nor ride horses or other beasts. These abilities do not exist as separate skills. For example, there is no skill 'literacy', instead choose a skill that would include reading such as lawyer or historian. Similarly, the default option is that a character cannot swim, fortunately in this campaign, unlike history, those who work around water (sailors, barge labourers etc.) learn to swim. Riding a horse or similar animal also requires a relevant skill. It may be possible to sit on a well trained beast led by another provided there is no

hurry and no rough terrain to be crossed.

With highly martial skills (like champion) it could be argued that a familiarity bonus could be applied to saves use in combat such as parry or dodge, after all an acrobat gets a bonus to dodge and acrobatic dodge attacks. To make this fair martial skills have access to one of the following:

- Able to use knockout attacks.
- A familiarity bonus to parry using two types of weapon (the lists in 1.52, were a type list has classes (eg. swords) one class counts against the two slots). For this purpose 'shields' is a type of weapon.
- A familiarity bonus to missile attack saves with one type of weapon.
- A familiarity bonus to dodge.
- A familiarity bonus to acrobatic dodge attacks

The one exception is martial artist that has more options to make playing an unarmed character feasible. Martial animal skills such as guard dog or warhorse only ever provide a familiarity bonus to dodge. Exception wild lions and other big cats kill by crushing the wind pipe and jugular a kind of knock out attack. Finally the knight provides a parry bonus and a dodge bonus but only under very specific circumstances.

There are four unusual 'skills' that are not learned knowledge like the others but represent magical abilities that lie dormant in some (such as 'wizards speech') are given last. These special skills are included because they are in the original rules (Wizard's Speech) or because they represent abilities common in many myths and fantasy fiction. I would recommend that no further unusual skills be added for the sake of preserving both balance and simplicity of play.

Some Skills

Acrobat: this skill provides only a one level drop in saves for acrobatic feats of Luck that anyone may attempt. It provides a familiarity bonus to acrobatic dodge attacks.

Alchemist: can create magical chemicals such as potions, powders, balms and paints (see notes for 2.2). Unlike an artificer an alchemist knows everything needed to brew and distil her products. Warriors cannot take this skill as they are magic blind.

Ambidexterity: can use either hand with equal ability. Does not imply high manual dexterity, DEX does that. When using two weapons the DEX requirements for both are at x1.5. The main advantage of this ambidexterity is if one hand is lost or injured.

Archer: A skilled mercenary or soldier highly trained so as to get a familiarity bonus in the creation, use, and maintenance of self bows and arrows. During times of peace archers compete at tournaments.

Artificer: can instil magical properties through ritual during the creation of objects crafted using other skills (see notes for 2.2). Items could be crafted by oneself or by others to exacting specifications. Items can only be permanently enchanted during creation, temporary enchantments to existing objects are the purview of wizard spells Warriors cannot take this skill as they are magic blind.

Barge labourer: can swim, knows her way around her homeland's canals and rivers. Skilled at steering and maintaining barges, handling the ponies or dogs sometimes used to pull barges, and packing cargo holds.

Boxer: this skill allows knock out attack from in front of an opponent but with fists only. Can entertain a crowd in the context of a fistfight.

Burglar: a thief that breaks into homes and other buildings to steal things. A burglar can pick locks and is adept at using 'jimmy' bars and climbing walls.

Carpenter: as well as being able to build in wood a carpenter is more likely to spot hidden panels, secret compartments and the like built into wooden things.

Champion: one often chosen to represent a people, noble, or temple etc. when disputes are resolved by single combat. Skilled at intimidation and has a favourable reputation among one group of people (e.g. your tribe, those devoted to a particular temple, etc.). The champion is familiar with commonalities in warrior codes of honour and legal uses of judicial combat. The champion chooses two types of weapon common in their home culture to receive a parry bonus with.

Charcoal Burner: you can make a living anywhere there is wood to burn. The skilled process of making charcoal involves piling wood up into a carefully shaped heap, covering that with a layer of soil and setting the wood smouldering beneath. The 'kiln' must be carefully watched since if the soil moves and too much oxygen gets in the wood will begin to blaze. When this happens the character must risk life and limb to cover the breach with soil. Charcoal 'kilns' take several days to finish a burn, charcoal burners get a familiarity bonus to put off sleep and have invented a one legged stool (5gp, 10lb). Close attention must be paid lest the kiln breach producing gouts of super-heated flames, charcoal burners get a familiarity bonus to saves involving fire including those to overcome a fear of fire. Charcoal burners also have an excuse to be almost anywhere since they sell their product door to door but are expect to come to the back entrance of manors.

Circus Animal: the beast's equivalent of acrobat. Unlike acrobat does not provide familiarity bonus to acrobatic dodge attacks.

Connoisseur: can identify, appreciate, critique and value foods, wines and beverages.

Desert Caravan Guard: skirmish tactics, desert rationing and navigation. The guard can ride both camels and horses. Familiarity bonus to parry with curved swords and daggers.

Executioner: Can supplement income with bribes 'to make it quick' by using the right knot, sharpening the axe or whatever. Executioner's have a grim reputation which gives them a bonus to intimidation rolls and similar tasks. Can use the ceremonial executioners axe without the usual penalty.

Engraver: a jeweller specialising in decorative engraving, useful for decorating metal weapons and plate armour. The cost of engraving is half the cost of the item and requires a month off from delving. At the end of this time the value of the now decorated item is double what it was before the process.

Farmer: you can make a living of good soil. You are good with animals and can ride a horse, drive a cart, and herd sheep and the like.

Farrier: can make and fit horse shoes. The character can ride horses and is good at handling them.

Guillemot egg collector: You can earn a living collecting eggs from birds that nest on sea cliffs. This profession is familiar with anything that might make their hazardous job safer. They gain a familiarity bonus to climb cliffs, use ropes, make unarmed parries vs. flying birds, or spot a storm coming in. They have no fear of heights.

Gladiator: gain a familiarity bonus for crowd working and showy displays of weaponry. The champion chooses two types of weapon to receive a parry bonus with.

Guard: you have served as a guard protecting a local noble and enforcing the law in his domain. You are well versed in intimidation, common laws and are alert against ambushes and the like. Guards receive a parry bonus with spears and straight swords.

Healer: a skill something like an aged care nurse or an experienced parent. Those under a healers care recover one extra CON each day. This skill can be used to perform first aid but not for emergency treatment of injuries (see 2.6). Healers cannot treat poisoning or infectious disease but those under their care do receive a one level bonus to CON rolls to overcome these ailments after they have been resting under a healers care for at least a day, if they can survive that long. Healers do not require any special equipment.

Herbalist: The knowledge of medicinal herbs can clot wounds, 'purge' the body, ease a fever, or prevent unplanned

additions to families. Herbalists are skilled at first aid and treatment of life threatening injuries. They can also try to cure poisonings and infectious disease. Those under a herbalist's care recover one extra CON each day. A herbalist requires a good supply of herbs. As initial equipment or if latter purchased these cost 1gp and mass 1unit per use. A use is a save or a day of caring for one recovering character. A herbalist can also gather wild herbs, the difficulty of this is left to the referee.

Historian: Knows much of the history of the region and of any kin he knows the language of. This skill includes literacy.

Hunter-Gatherer: the character knows the survival techniques typical of primitive tribes and lone monsters who live in the wilds. These primitives receive a bonus when throwing spears.

Innkeeper: you used to run an inn. You get a familiarity bonus when valuing an inn's wares (food, drink, lodging and stabling) and when dealing with drunks.

Ironmonger: the character has the necessary contacts to sell scrap iron. The price paid is that for scrap only 3 silver pieces per pound of iron in any form.

Jester: useful for gaining entry to noble courts but not for being taken seriously once there. A familiarity bonus might apply to entertain or make friends with comedy.

Knight: a lesser noble charged with military duties in times of war. A knight's combat abilities are covered by his type (wizards may not be knights, most are warriors but some may be rogues or warrior-wizards) this skill covers riding horses, rules of jousting and other tournaments, etiquette and other activities of armoured nobles. Parry bonus with shields. A bonus to dodge for horse and rider if riding a trained warhorse and the dodge is the knight's initiated action.

Lawyer: literacy, the law, and courtroom behaviour are your forte.

Locksmith: adept at picking locks as well as fixing and installing them.

Mahut: a trainer and handler of elephants.

Martial Artist: the skill of unarmed combat. Providing a familiarity bonus to dodges, unarmed parries, unarmed acrobatic dodge-attacks, and leaping. They also receive a bonus to interrupts to perform any of these actions or make an unarmed attack. The skill does not increase unarmed attack damage. Martial artists of note have high attributes and therefore high personal adds which explains the punishment they can inflict.

Midwife: you know what to expect from childbirth and how to minimise the risks for mother and child. You have the respect of most women.

Mugger: allows knock out attacks with a blunt weapon but only against unsuspecting targets from behind.

Naturalist: you are a store of knowledge on animals and plants.

Noble: you know the genealogy of upper class families, horse riding, etiquette, fashion and other pursuits of the rich

Outlaw: you hide in the wilds and rob passing travellers or at least you used to. Not all outlaws are bad think Robin Hood. This skill is good for sneaking and hiding in the wilderness and intimidation. It provides no combat bonuses.

Priest: while the gods don't usually interfere with mortal concerns having a formal position in a faith has advantages; you receive a bonus when dealing with devout followers of the same faith and you know about your own religion and those of other faiths. For pious characters consider also 'favoured' described below. I assume that in my campaign numerous faiths co-exist uneasily within the world. Priest characters should take a few minutes to write a brief description of their faith.

Sailor: good for working on ships and handling smaller boats, can also swim.

Scribe: A scribe can take dictation and may embellish for effect or correct grammar. A scribe also is familiar with the

forms of typical letters and can write a good letter from a brief command “Baldric write and tell the baron I wont stand for this!”.

Stonemason: you can cut stone to shape for use in building. Stonemasons receive a familiarity bonus when searching for or disabling simple masonry based traps and tricks such as pits, falling blocks and sliding walls.

Stall keeper: prior to adventuring you made a living running a market stall. You receive a familiarity bonus when haggling for goods and for valuing good of the particular kind you used to ply.

Surgeon: learned medicine in this age is often bloody, brutal and painful but surgeons are often your best bet if you wish to survive a gruesome battlefield injury. While effective at administering first aid and emergency surgery these professionals are of no use against poison or disease nor are they skilled at caring for those in convalescence. A surgeon must have her tools to perform treatments. A surgeon’s tools looks like a mix of butcher’s, torturer’s, and tailor’s tools and includes lancets, bone saws, cauterising irons and bleeding bowls. A surgeon’s tools are worth 100gp and mass 100 units (10 lb).

Tracker: used by the law to track criminals but also lost children in the wilds. The character can track humans, monsters, and beasts through the wild.

Wheelwright: the trade of making and repairing wheels for carts, coaches, wheelbarrows and siege engines. The wheelwright’s trade uses both metal and wood so a wheelwright can also do simple carpentry and metalwork.

Wise-woman: combines the skills of midwife, healer and herbalist but only in the treatment of common ailments and problems which does not include the kind of terrible wounds inflicted in combat (anytime a character is maimed for more than 5pt of damage this skill wont help). Every village has a wise woman who also acts as a mediator and agony aunt. She is trusted implicitly by the villagers but often miss-trusted by nobles and priests who can see her as a threat to their authority.

Magical & Unusual Skills.

Magical skills have a flat CON cost which is not modified for Type or Level.

Wizard Speech is a powerful innate ability the same in effect as the 13th level spell of the same name. The ability has none of the usual requirements for a 13th level spell, and can only be cast on oneself, but does cost 90 CON (innate abilities use CON) for each 6 turns of use and has a range of 100’. It is assumed that the ability commonly lies dormant in many individuals without sufficient CON. The user is heard as a distinctly ‘outside’ voice in the listener’s head and many react negatively to the perceived ‘violation’. Warriors cannot take this skill as they are magic blind.

There are two other magical ‘skills’.

Second Sight: a rare gift but not as rare as wizard speech. The character has the innate ability to cast second sight as if a wizard. They need not meet the usual IQ and DEX requirements but must still pay 25 CON to use. Warriors cannot take this skill as they are magic blind.

Sensitive: a rare gift but not as rare as wizard speech. The character has the innate ability to cast detect magic but need not meet the usual IQ and DEX requirements but must still pay 1 CON to use. Warriors cannot take this skill as they are magic blind. The skill is of little use to Wizards and Warrior-wizards who are trained to use this ability at no cost.

This next skill isn’t magical but seems to work on a ‘deeper level’ of the universe or is perhaps just the effect of the character being on the ‘far end of the bell curve of good fortune’. This skill is optional because of the slight complication it adds to game play and because it places the burden of inventing lucky breaks on the referee which may be difficult especially for those new to running games.

Optional Skill: Favoured: It seems like either faceless fate, or some deity, smiles upon you so that you are favoured

by turns of good fortune. Many characters with this skill are pious but not all, some believe different gods take a liking to mortals for different reasons; a trickster god may favour a risk taking scoundrel, a goddess of war may protect a bloodthirsty killer and a love god might smooth the way for a hapless Casanova. For others it seems there is no explanation other than the capriciousness of fate. Every time the character's death is imminent or something will reduce the character's CON to zero or less the character makes a save against Luck. If the save is successful some fortunate occurrence saves the character. Hits in combat become near misses for other events the referee determines what saves the character. Usually after the stroke of good luck is no better or worse off than before but occasionally (particularly if NPCs come to the 'rescue') the referee may alter the character's circumstances and where survival is very unlikely the referee may allot damage or even reduce the character to 1 CON. Such extremes include being caught in a gully during an elephant stampede, being dropped 3000' by a giant eagle, or being engulfed by a forest fire. What level is this save at? The first time this ability is used the save is at 1st level, the second time it is at 2nd level and so on. The save level always increases each time the favoured character gets a save to survive when others wouldn't, it never goes down. Keep track of how many times you have used this ability. You may not choose to forego a save, the ability is always 'on'. To keep this skill useful, characters will have to neglect other ability scores and devote most levels to increases in LK, otherwise it can increase the survival rate of low level characters while having little effect when the characters progress.

Advice for inventing lucky breaks. A character dieing of thirst could be saved by rain, a fall from a cliff could be broken by a shirt catching on a bush growing out of the cliff, if a trap is supposed to fill a room with burning oil the mechanism jams. Another ploy is the intervention of a helpful NPC or creature, such creatures need not be friendly, a slaver might see the PC as cheap merchandise, a mercenary might demand a fee, and the 'law' might arrest them. Experienced referees will weave potential lucky breaks into the campaign's story ready for use. For example she could introduce a shaman predicting rain, have a minor trap in a tomb fail due to rust and age, stage slaves for sale in the local market, she might have a town guard patrol march by, or have the characters share drinks with the mercenary between adventures. Not all of these pre-emptive introductions will bear fruit but when a lucky break does come from one it will seem less 'jarring' on the flow of the story.

Some Equipment

Equipment useful in T&T given with cost and weight (in units, 10 units to the pound).

Beginner's package everyday clothing, pack, non-preserved food, and compass 10gp 200

Clothing, everyday 2gp 40

Charcoal burner's (one legged) stool 5gp 100

Flint and steel 2gp 10

Food, not preserved per day 2 40

Large Sack 1gp 50

Lock picks 30gp 20

Lode Stone 2gp 10 on a string.

Medicinal herbs require herbalist skill to use these cost 1gp and mass 1unit per use. A use is a save or a day of caring for one recovering character. A herbalist can also gather wild herbs the difficulty of this is left to the referee.

Pack 3gp 50

Surgeon's tools look like a mix of butcher's, torturer's, and tailor's tools. Including but not limited to lancets, bone saws, cauterising irons and bleeding bowls. A surgeon's tools are worth 100gp and mass 100 units (10 lb).

Realistic Biology

by Karl Brown

This article is in response to “Realistic World Design”; an excellent article and will be of great help designing fantasy worlds and the kinds of implausible worlds that dominate science fiction. I agree with the statement that “World design should seek believability and emphasise the unusual within the bounds of possibility.” However, in order to use the article to create a plausible world one extra piece of advice is required. The biological advice given only applies to terraformed worlds populated with organisms from Earth (perhaps genetically engineered for the new world). It is so unlikely as to be implausible that we will find a truly Earth-like world. Gamers may want worlds where humans can breathe the air, eat the plants, and bathe naked in the oceans, this is fine but if you are to create a plausible universe these human friendly worlds HAVE to be the result of terraforming.

So why only terraformed worlds? The article notes that science fiction worlds often include items that contradict scientific understanding and his article is a valiant attempt to prevent this. However, **the most common significant error made by science fiction world builders is the assumption that alien life will be very like Earth life.** The article by focusing on human friendly worlds fails to address this most common error. I cannot think of a single film or television series that has featured a realistic portrayal of alien life. The article includes statements that should only apply to Earth and worlds terraformed and inhabited by Earth-life.

Examples of such statements from the article include: “Stars should be of the right type to justify the presence of life and planets should be in a habitable zone.” and “The atmosphere should be of benign gases and an appropriate pressure.” also “*Flora and fauna will match climatic conditions, will subsist according to the niche, food webs and trophic levels, will have species differentiation according to common descent*” is problematic because it is full of assumptions (in italics here) that do not even apply to all life on Earth let alone alien life.

Statements like the below are likely completely inappropriate for likely alien worlds:

“In Group A, tropical plants are predominantly broadleaved evergreens, with extensive forests and undergrowth and a canopy reaching up to fifty metres as thin, lush, trees seek new heights.”

None of the above limiting statements and others like them in the article will apply to life evolved on other worlds.

Alien worlds have different conditions to Earth that should create very different life that in turn will alter the environment in different ways creating different atmospheres, climates, and surface coverings than Earth. Even some geological features are dependent life; the White Cliffs of Dover are made of tiny skeletons. Even if the physical characteristics of planet Earth was replicated **evolution has a random element and would *not* reproduce humanoids, vertebrates, or even DNA.** If you are recreating a popular Science fiction film or novel universe Lev’s article is sufficient because almost all science fiction fails this simple reality check. If you are creating an original setting and want very Earth-like worlds while remaining scientifically plausible then your back-story should include widespread terraforming. If you want humanoid aliens then genetic engineering of humans is the only plausible explanation for your ‘aliens’. These terraformed worlds and Earth are likely to be the only worlds we will ever know that allow human beings like ourselves to live on the surface without huddling within sealed shelters.

So what kinds of worlds could life thrive on? In general the climate section of the article assumes a very Earth-like world, this is very unlikely without terraforming. Life bearing alien worlds will be very diverse but hostile to unprotected humans. The 'habitable zone' around stars is based on our experiences on our small world and not generally applicable. Solar radiation is an important determiner of climate but other sources of energy can be of equal importance especially on worlds that are not carbon copies of Earth. On Europa the climate of the habitable ocean is determined by heat from tidal activity caused by the gravitational influences of Jupiter and the Sun. There are several moons orbiting gas giants that are known to have a liquid water ocean covered by ice or are likely to have one. I speculate that living worlds in our universe are mostly of the ice covered 'Europan' type and worlds with oceans that are liquid all the way through like Earth's could be very rare. Gas Giants are another possible abode of life. Many gas giants have dense clouds of water and ammonia droplets and plenty of carbon compounds. More radically, some theories of planetary and stellar formation postulate the existence of worlds drifting through interstellar space without the warmth of a sun. Such 'dark worlds' would retain the thick primordial hydrogen/methane/ammonia atmosphere normally blown off by solar radiation. The heat of their creation trapped within this thick atmosphere could keep the world warm for billions of years, long enough for life to arise and possibly evolve into complex forms. How rare are dark worlds? We don't know. They may be more common than worlds with liquid water on the surface. An extreme, but plausible, possibility is that the universe is mostly inhabited by organisms living on dark sunless worlds.

So what do I mean by likely alien life? Life on Earth is adapted to the conditions of this planet and is the result of many random events. Even if you were to re-run the planet earth from the beginning you would not inevitably produce humans, vertebrates, or even familiar DNA with its 'universal code'. Alien worlds have alien conditions and are even less likely to recreate Earth-life.

Alien life will have a different biochemistry. However this statement does not imply silicon or other fanciful ideas that populate science fiction television. I'd mostly agree about liquid water being necessary for life but would not completely discount non-water life. Ammonia or an ammonia-water mix, both polar solvents, may be possible. Ammonia as a solvent for life is likely to be rare as the conditions that allow for stable liquid ammonia on worlds are rarer than those needed for liquid water.

I too have a carbon bias, but readers should not confuse carbon biochemistry for Earth-like biochemistry. Carbon chemistry allows for a great deal of diversity and it is unlikely that alien life beyond our inner solar system has, say, DNA or familiar proteins. If you really want to create science fiction worlds based on current/emerging science don't create Earth-like biochemistry. **Aliens cannot eat you and you cannot eat them. You can't catch alien diseases or parasites.** More fundamentally, alien carbon based chemistry adapted to other worlds will allow different structural strengths, energy efficiencies, mutation rates, and ability to deal with temperature, radiation and so on. The formulae in my article 'Biophysics for Gamers' should not be used for alien organisms. For example greater radiation from F type stars may not preclude alien life, because the chemistry of that life would be adapted at the molecular level to higher radiation (also Europan type worlds would provide shielding from radiation and could have liquid water even at great distances from the star).

Alien life will not necessarily require oxygen. Oxygen indicates life, not the other way around. Similarly, if oxygen is present alien life may be able to withstand higher and/or lower concentrations. Oxygen is actually a deadly poison for many organisms here on Earth who die if exposed to normal air.



Given alien worlds, alien biochemistry, and the role of random chance in evolution what would alien organisms look like? Alien flora and fauna is unlikely to follow Earth-like patterns. Real aliens will be nothing like Orcs, Klingons, Wookies, K'kree, Yazirians, or Greys. Anything that is humanoid, a vertebrate, or has a nose on its face can only plausibly be Earth-life. I'm not saying don't use humanoid or vertebrate aliens but if you do and you want to be in line with the **plausible humanoid 'aliens' HAVE to be the product of genetic engineering of Earth-life**. Noses, humanoid body plans, and vertebrae are all likely to be unique to Earth. So what feature could a plausible alien have? Well if a feature is present across a broad range of Earth life then it has probably the kind of thing that has independently evolved several times and therefore is very likely to evolve. Lots of animals have spines (backbones) but they are all pretty closely related. The vertebrate spine has only arisen once on Earth. Jointed limbs, eyes, skin, and scales are good examples of features that have evolved many times here on Earth and might be found on aliens. Spiders, octopi, and flat worms don't have spinal cords but they do have eyes. Hair might also qualify; spiders, humans, and even some plants have hair-like structures. Nervous systems are also common and likely just don't get fixated on the idea of a spine; even a pond hydra has a nervous system. **To create a plausible alien assemble a body plan unlike any found on Earth from the palette of likely 'universal' features.** It should not be a 'giant spider' or humanoid, or a 12 legged octopus but something truly alien. Good fictional examples include those from "Wheelers" by Stewart and Cohen "A World of Difference" by Turtledove, and in "A Deepness in the Sky" by Vinge. I cannot think of any others because bad biology is the norm in science fiction. Traveller's Hivers and the Bugs of the Starship Troopers film would qualify except they have Earth-biochemistry (DNA, able to eat Earth-life etc.) and very similar tolerances to oxygen, temperature and so on as humans. Another alternative for large flying creatures is to assume that alien biochemistry, though still carbon based, has produced structural tissues with greater strength than our bones. Similarly high gravity worlds need not produce squat stocky creatures. Adaptions to cold or heat are also relative to the native biochemistry. Alien creatures could be comfortable at lower or higher temperatures not because of fur analogs or needle leaves but because their chemistry of life evolved in warmer or cooler conditions.

The taxonomic system used here on Earth is not going to be useful on alien worlds. In fact it is 'challenged' by our own

bacteria. Alien life may not be split into genetically isolated species as life here on Earth is. Species and sexes are also tied to biochemistry. Male and female are states that evolve out of an evolutionary strategy of isolating genetic material within a population (a species) and paired sets of genetic material. Lots of organisms have males and females (humans, oaks, lobsters) but all of these share a common ancestor, male/female sex is common not because it is likely, it has only arisen once, but because it is ancient. Bacteria do things very differently. Alien organisms who are not even using DNA and living in a different world with different levels of mutagens and environmental stability are very unlikely to have our familiar male and female sexes. Even the divisions, like 'animals' and 'plants', we tend to put life into have areas of grey here on Earth; on alien worlds human visitors may have trouble deciding which organisms are 'plants'. Alien photosynthesises need not be green. An alien ecology might not even use photosynthesis if it is in the dark. Some alien ecologies might not have such a sharp division between plants, animals and other trophic levels. Alien worlds certainly won't have the 'broadleaved evergreens' and other such plants familiar to Earthlings. For a fictional example of very different but plausible alien ecology see "Dreaming in Smoke" by Sullivan. Unfortunately, Sullivan's biology is flawed because her alien life can infect humanity, an impossibility.

In summary, the plausible possibilities of life are far stranger than generally imagined by authors of fiction and are likely to inhabit a variety of worlds. Even on planets very similar to Earth the random elements of evolution will prevent Earth-like life from evolving. Given the enormous range of possibilities it is highly unlikely that humans will ever discover a world where they can live unprotected. If you want to create such worlds the only plausible backstory is terraforming.

Further reading suitable for a lay audience:

Any good current basic biology textbook will give you a feel to the incredible diversity of life on our planet and with it a glimpse of the possibilities for other worlds.

Wheeters I Stewart and J Cohen (novel)

Dreaming in Smoke T Sullivan (novel)

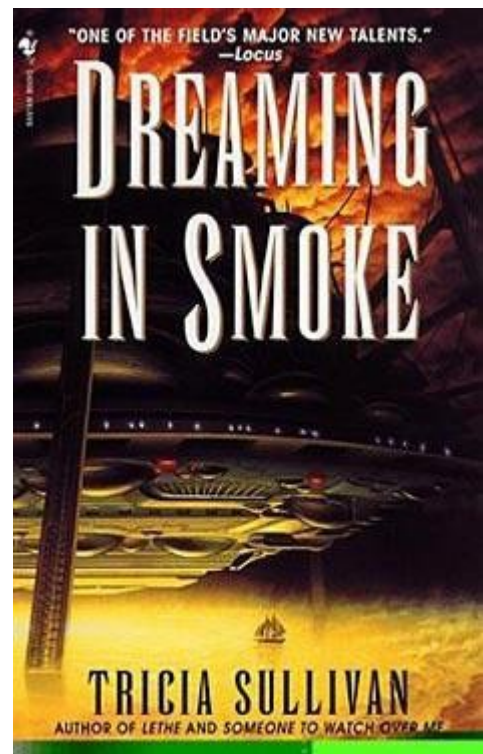
What does a Martian look like? J Cohen and I Stewart

Life, but not as we know it. D. Fox New Scientist 9 June 2007

For plants on alien worlds it isn't easy being green. J Hecht. New Scientist 11 April 2007

Lost Worlds M Chown New Scientist, Issue 2318, 24 November 2001

Cosmos C Sagan 1979 (an oldie but a goodie)



Gulliver's Trading Company: England 1680-1730

by Karl Brown

This is a notable time of peace and prosperity and therefore an opportune time to invest in a new trading venture

Gulliver's Trading Company (GTC) is the role playing game in the world of Gulliver's Travels. GTC PC's can come from all of the nations of Gulliver's Travels, even Brobdingnagians, the GTC is an English company so player characters are likely to be predominantly English. This is an introduction to England in the world of Gulliver's Travels, a grim version of the 18th century. There are only minor deviations from the real England making this guide useful for referees and players of other games set around 1730.

It is the historical calm after the English Civil Wars but before the Napoleonic Age of Sail. England is a small, vulnerable emerging power with barely an inkling of the world dominating empire that will come in the next century.

Permission is given to print or photocopy this article for personal use. It makes an excellent handout for new players.

For more on Gulliver's Trading Company there is a free downloadable version at: <http://rpgreview.net/node/40> and a more recent version can be found at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/45719729/Gullivers-Trading-Co-Grub2>

National Character

Seen through the bleak lens of Gulliver's Travels the English are a proud and factious people living in a land of vice, crime, and corruption. If recent history is any indication then avarice, faction, hypocrisy, perfidiousness, cruelty, rage, madness, hatred, envy, lust, malice, and ambition are common personality traits of the English, especially those with political power. Like Lemuel Gulliver, player characters may be exceptionally honest and upstanding.

Fashion

English ladies wear lace caps, wide hooped gowns (farthingale), loose around the shoulders, low necked, with three quarter length sleeves. Conservative women swayed by the clergy's opposition to the 'hoop' might still wear the similar but unhooped old-fashioned (contouche) gown. The gowns were decorated with ribbons, lace, pleating, and fine gauze false under-sleeves. A decorative apron might be worn over this. Small lace caps were also common. Out-of-doors a hooded red cloak, a 'cardinal', is worn. All this hides a supporting corset. Shoes are high heeled. At home women wore slippers. When travelling a longer cloak is added.

English gentlemen prefer long brown wigs or shorter wigs with a pigtail, increasingly within a black bag. The bagwig was originally for use on the battlefield and is considered improper by most and rakish by some. Embroidered silk or Lilliputian wool waistcoats beneath sombre coats fitted and flared with deep cuffs. The waistcoats and coats are so long they almost cover the breeches. A new fashion has just emerged for leaving the top buttons of the waistcoat open to

display a frilled shirt. Legs are covered by velvet breeches and silk stockings; the feet by leather high-heeled shoes. On journeys shoes are replaced by high boots and a long cloak is added. Men of all ranks and many ladies carry snuffboxes. No gentleman would be without a pocket watch.

Lower class English dress more plainly. Women, even servants, wear plainer versions of the farthingale or contouche, and lace caps. Women working in fashionable shops could be as well dressed as genteel ladies. Tradesmen and labourers might wear a simple shirt beneath a dark coloured jacket with a short collar and the sleeves turned up. A farm labourer might wear a smock. Working class men did not usually wear wigs. Lower class men wore knee length breeches and black woollen stockings. Both men and women might wear hardwearing waterproof clogs over their shoes.

There are no national military uniforms yet. The New Model Army is unusual in that members wear a consistent colour scheme of red and grey. This is not a uniform just a colour scheme to a motely collection of civilian cloths. There are no naval uniforms at all. Uniforms are properly part of the later Napoleonic era.

England is an armed society; no gentleman's attire is complete without a small sword and flintlock pocket pistol. Many people carry a knife or bludgeon.

Diet

The English reputation for poor cooking is well established by this time. The English philosophy on cooking seems to be 'when in doubt boil it'. Proper English food like cold roast beef and Yorkshire pudding was supposed to be simple hearty fare, rather bland and stoggy, quite unlike the fancy sauces of the French.

Meat was an important part of the diet with even servants regularly eating meats. King George I can have up to nine meat dishes in a dinner including whole roasted Lilliputian bullock. In cities and towns the quality of meat could be very poor, so much so that holding one's breath when consuming it is advised. Meat is often roasted, boiled, or salted. Meat is most often eaten cold with hot meat dishes reserved for special occasions.

Vegetables eaten could include artichokes and French beans on richer tables. More common were potatoes and peas. Dried peas were common in soups. Often vegetables were boiled with a mix of flour and butter. Fruits are only seen on the tables of the well to do and then only cooked fruit. Raw fruit is believed to cause indigestion and possibly spread the plague!

Milk is hard to get unless taken straight from the cow. It is often sold watered down by cheating shopkeepers. There are tens of different cheeses made in England at this time.

Typical dinners contained cold meats, puddings, and wine, or if there were visitors a hot meal. Cold meat as a smaller supper before sleeping was also common. Puddings were often served beside the meats. Pudding ingredients include milk, butter, sugar, suet, marrow and raisins. Most puddings are steamed or boiled. Gruel is common (boiled oatmeal, butter and perhaps wine).

Aboard English ships diet is monotonous and can cause poor health. The daily menu consists of salt beef and pork, sauerkraut, dried anchovies, hard tack (a dry biscuit) and peas, with breakfasts of oatmeal and raisins.

The national drink of England is open to debate; tea, beer, coffee, cider, and increasingly gin are good candidates. Tea is very expensive. It is a crime to dry, roll, and resell tea-leaves but many servants still do this. Coffee houses are also popular especially since the beverage is believed to enhance male virility. For women chocolate, as a drink, is said to improve fertility. To prepare chocolate boil for hours, remove cocoa butter, reheat with milk, and thicken with eggs.

Religion

Western Europe's nations are Christian and either Catholic or Protestant. Catholics support the ancient traditions of the Church led by the Pope in Rome. Protestants are split into hundreds of sects all sharing a desire to move away from the ceremony and hierarchy of the Catholic Church. In all nations not following the state sponsored faith reduces your rights or is illegal.

In England limited dissent is allowed from the State-sponsored Anglican Church. There are numerous Protestant sects in England. Religious freedom is far from perfect though, Catholic, non-Christian worship, or atheism is illegal and socially unacceptable.

Occupations

Labour is strictly divided by class. The nobility and wealthier gentry engage in learning, the clergy, military leadership, government, and managing their estates. Gentry of lesser means engage in business (including stock markets), or learn a profession (such as lawyer, navigator, or surgeon). The best off of the working classes are those in a trade (such as carpentry) who if frugal and skilled can become very comfortable. For the poor there are limited opportunities in the army and navy but most are trapped in hard labour, begging, or crime.

Englishmen proudly gave their women 'lenity and indulgence'. Women often dominated the household and their husbands, a situation unacceptable in other nations or the next century. Women work openly as common sailors in the nation's navy and covertly disguised as men in England's army. There are literary 'blue stocking clubs' for women. One notable English woman, Mary Read (1690-1721), during her life worked as a man as a cabinboy, soldier, and merchant-sailor. In addition she at times lived as a woman working as an innkeeper's wife, pirate, commissioned privateer, and died a prisoner. Despite all this women do not enjoy all the rights and liberties afforded to men. The high rate of literacy is beginning to produce female writers who push for change, such as Mary Astell, but organisations such as the suffragettes do not yet exist.

Housing

English architecture has seen many recent stylistic movements. Older Baroque buildings are still common. Palladian architecture, based on classical Roman styles, is a popular choice for great mansions such as Houghton Hall in Norfolk.

More common are plain new red brick or white stucco Georgian style homes and terrace houses. Older homely Queen Anne era red brick houses with large windows are also quite common. In rural areas there are two story farmhouses and more humble single story cottages.

The home of a prosperous shopkeeper or lawyer is a red brick building with fine doorway sheltered by a pillared porch. Inside are a dining room, drawing room, study, kitchen, pantry, china closet, washhouse, and perhaps a home brewery. Upstairs there are four bedrooms for the family while the servants live in the attic. There is no bathroom. The privy is located within the productive back garden. The front garden is decorative with hedges and roses.

The mansions of the wealthy include a grand central block with a portico flanked by wings for the stables and kitchens. Within there is likely a private library, salon, dining room, multiple bedrooms &c. Interior decorating includes Italian velvets or silks hanging on walls painted in gentle colours, ornamental mouldings for the ceilings, and slender pillars.

Customs and Diversions

The English have numerous sports and past times. For the rich sports include: cricket, bare knuckle boxing (as sponsors, not participants), horse racing, cards, and hunting. Coffee houses are alive with politics, business, poetry, and intrigue. There are Aristocratic Clubs for gentlemen and less-exclusive Literary Clubs. Plays are popular, including those by Foote, as are Italian operas. Vauxhall Gardens has all these attractions together with music, wine punch, and chocolate.

Since the art of distilling gin became well known at the start of the century an increasing number of 'Dram Shoppes' brings cheap drink to the poor and complaints from the public houses and breweries that supply the nation's beer. Brothels and bagnios (vapour baths) cater to all classes. Covent Garden is a less aristocratic version of Vauxhall and also is London's main fruit and vegetables market. There are plans for a new theatre at Covent Garden. Beyond the towns rural villages meet in football matches that resemble brawls. Country inns are venues for bowls, skittles, shovelboard, cockfighting, and brawling.

Having freed the presses from the royal censorship normal to most nations the English can enjoy newspapers, pamphlets, poems, stories, and histories full of uncouth or slanderous declarations. It is notable that even servants and shoeblacks are often literate in England. Common people club together to buy newspapers creating a large readership for the presses of Grubb and Fleet streets.

Crafts and Learning

England is a largely literate nation; even shoeblacks can read. Newspapers are a national passion and clubs that pitch in to buy a paper between them are common. England has two great universities where many sons of nobles and some gentry attend. Despite this, the king of Brobdingrag was not convinced that the development of the minds and bodies of English nobles was sufficient for them to hold their places in the House of Lords, particularly with regard to their understanding of the law.

Lower class English is peppered with colourful slang. The Universal Etymological English Dictionary, by N. Bailey,

London, 1737, Vol. II, can be found on-line and provides a wealth of vulgar 1720s-1730s slang.

From the 1690's Newcomen atmospheric engines are used to pump water out of mines. Such devices are huge, stationary devices that occasionally explode. Steam power is not used in factories and cannot power ships or other vehicles. In 1700 Britain produces 2 ½ million tons of coal, more than any other nation of the world. This feeds an incredible manufacturing industry for such a small island.

Other recent innovations include spring suspension for coaches since 1704 and constant improvement in timepieces.

Law and Justice

There is no national police force; parish constables and watchmen ineffectually enforce the Law. Constables are generally lazy or corrupt deputies of the parish high constable who are paid bounties for criminals caught. Watchmen are old men good for raising the alarm and little else. Street gangs roam at night, almost everyone buys from smugglers, and highwaymen are common.

The Courts of Justice are busy places in England. There seems to be an excess of laws governing everything; bakers give you a thirteenth loaf when you buy a dozen to avoid prosecution for short weight. Crimes in England are perpetrated despite the whipping-posts, pillories, gibbets, dungeons and other places of misery where draconian punishments are meted out. As well as dealing with criminals the courts are also called upon to arbitrate many other disputes since a person can bring a case to court even if manifestly unjust. The outcome of a case can often be swayed by political or religious factors that are extraneous to the matter under judgement. Those who seek resolution through the law will find that the lawyers of this nation are particularly skilled at arguing unjust causes, prolonging proceedings, and extracting fees.

Geography and Nature

England is blessed with a temperate climate and rich soils. This has enabled the growth of the population nearly six million people. A large population for a small island, but compared to the other powers of the world England is a tiny upstart island nation.

Recent improvements in agriculture including new plant varieties, new livestock breeds, and imported breeds, such as the Lilliputian cattle brought back by Lemuel Gulliver, all have increased the quantity, quality, and variety of England's produce.

The harvesting of forests for charcoal to feed the growing iron, glass and gunpowder industries relies on copping, the cutting of branches rather than whole trees. This practice thins the woodlands letting in light and allowing bluebells to grow. Here industry leaves not a scar, but beautifies the landscape. Elsewhere forests utterly vanish to supply wood for ships and free land for the plough. This is generally considered good progress.

The earth of the nation is also harvested for vast amounts of coal as well as lead, iron, tin, and silver.

Travel between towns is by mail coach along muddy roads, by river barge, or by sea. Canals are still rare.

Trade and Relations

England governs itself, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and 13 American colonies. From dominated lands the companies of England extract great wealth for their shareholders some of which is diverted by taxation into the coffers of the Treasury. Gulliver's Trading Company seeks out new lands suitable for similar treatment. Law restricts international trade, for example a Royal Charter grants a monopoly to the East India Company in trade between England and Asia. The American colonies and Ireland can only legally trade with England, no other nation. Trade into England is also restricted. For example it is illegal to import calicos and silks from India, Persia, and China (to protect English weavers).

Several civil wars are within living memory. The most recent being the failed Jacobite Revolt of 1715. James The Pretender failed to seize the throne with the aid of Scottish Catholics and French support. The recent civil wars won common English people greater freedoms than the citizens of France, placed even the King under the Law, and put more power in the hands of parliament.

In 1730 England is not at war, a most unusual state for this nation. Recent hostility with France and Spain may soon flare up again. Usually wars are fought at least with the pretext of conflict between faiths, England being Protestant while France and Spain Catholic. Portugal is an ally of England.

Like most modern nations England maintains a costly standing army. The cost is not due to the rate of pay received by soldiers, they are often close to destitute, but the sheer number of them. However its small population cannot supply enough soldiers to defend the colonies so the budding Empire must supplement its forces with native allies.

The nation also maintains an impressive fleet of warships but conditions for sailors are,



'I could plainly discover from whence one Family derives a long Chin.'

if anything, worse than for infantry. While impressive for the 1730's the number of ships and the sizes of the vessels are much smaller than the better known Age of Sail that is yet to come.

Fifty years of English Living Memory

This history of recent events provides inspiration for players detailing backgrounds for characters. Also provided are dates relevant to the history of the GTC and Lemuel Gulliver.

1680: William Dockwra establishes the London Penny Post. Items up to one pound delivered within 10 miles of London for one penny.

1681 4 March: A royal charter provides a land grant to William Penn in the new world, beginning of the Pennsylvania Colony. Lemuel Gulliver ends his apprenticeship.

1682: Edmund Halley predicts the return of a comet. Lemuel Gulliver begins his study of Physic at Leyden. There are no British medical schools at this time.

1683 28th July: Wedding of Princess Anne of Britain to George, Prince of Denmark.

1684: Lemuel Gulliver takes a position on the Swallow and voyages include those to the Levant.

1685: 6 February: Coronation of King James II.

1685: Monmouth Rebellion, The would-be king, the Duke of Monmouth is defeated and later executed.

1686: James II suspends the laws persecuting Protestant Dissenters and Catholics and promotes Catholics to key positions.

1687 June: Lemuel Gulliver marries Mary Burton and begins a clinic with his old master Dr Bates.

1688: The Whig Revolution, Churchill defects from supporting James II to the side of William Prince of Orange. In December James II flees to France. William and Mary take the throne.

1689 February: James II lands in Ireland accompanied by a small French force. Graham of Claverhouse, viscount Dundee raises a Jacobite army in the Highlands of Scotland. This army disperses soon after his death in Ireland. Bill of Rights defines the powers of king and Parliament. Toleration Act grants freedom of worship to Protestant Dissenters and Puritans. Catholic and non-Christian worship remains illegal, as does atheism. Lemuel's business partner Dr Bates dies. Business at the clinic declines. Jonathan Swift starts work as secretary to Sir William Temple. Lemuel's first son, Johnny, is born.

1690: Battle of Boyne between the forces of William and James II. James deserts to France and his Irish forces retreat.



Irish resistance to English rule continues.

1691: September: Limerick surrenders in exchange for better terms for Catholics, a promise that is later broken.

1692: January: Unrest in Scotland. William gathers oaths from all the Chiefs of the Clans.

1693: The Barony of Culbin in Northern Scotland is destroyed by a sandstorm.

1694 27th July: Bank of England founded. Beginning of national debt.

1695: The Bank of Scotland founded. A window tax is introduced in England. Many shopkeepers brick up display windows.

1696: The Licencing Act is allowed to expire. Printing presses are now free of royal censorship.

1697: The Treaty of Ryswick ends both the Nine Years War and King William's War. The hostilities between England and the Grand Alliance led by France resume five years later.

1698: An Act of Parliament grants the English Company the right to compete with the British East India Company in the East Indies. The Tories seize power from the Whigs.

1699 5th November: the Antelope is wrecked near Lilliput.

1700: Death of Prince William Duke of Gloucester Queen Anne's only surviving child aged 11. This leave the Protestant succession to the throne of England in doubt.

1701: Act of Settlement limits royal power in Britain. Start of the War of Spanish Succession.

1702: Newspapers become available in London. Marlborough's British troops drive the French from Holland. Death of King William. Anne coronated Queen of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Miniature cattle and sheep from Lilliput and Blefuscu arrive in England with Lemuel Gulliver. He makes some money showing them to persons of Quality. The fine fleeces of miniature sheep begin to be greatly valued.

1703: Signing of the Methuen Treaty giving preference to importing Portuguese wines over the French. Port begins to become popular in England. The Great Storm kills thousands in southern England.

1704: Marlborough's forces victorious at Blenheim preventing the fall of Vienna and Austria to the French. Marshall Tallard commander of the French forces is captured.

1705: Isaac Newton is Knighted. Edmund Hailey predicts the return of a comet in 1757.

1706: Marlborough's army victorious at Ramilles, Belgium is conquered. Curiosities from Lemuel Gulliver's voyage to Brobdingrag arrive in England.

1707: Scottish and English Parliaments agree to unite the countries. Scotland loses its own parliament.

1708: Prince Eugene of Austria and Marlborough victorious at Oudenarde after the latter marching army, guns and baggage 50 miles in 65 hours.

1709: Marlborough and Prince Eugene lead armies to victory at the siege of Tournai and at Malplaquet.

1709 6th May: Lemuel leaves the Court of Luggnagg for the port of Glangruenstald.

1709, 12th May: Lemuel leaves Luggnagg.

1709 27th May: Lemuel arrives in Xamoschi, Japan still claiming to be Dutch.

1709 21st April: Lemuel arrives in Clumennig, a port of Luggnagg.

1711 9th May: Lemuel Gulliver marooned on Houyhnhnm Land.

1710: A novel new law the Statute of Anne or 'An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by vesting the Copies of Printed Books in the Authors or purchasers of such Copies, during the Times therein mentioned' granting 'copyright' to

authors comes into effect.

1711: The South Sea Company formed to trade with the Spanish colonies.

1712: a £100 bounty is announced for members of London street gangs including the Mohocks. The gang problem abates but never quite vanishes.

1713: Treaty of Utrecht ends the Spanish War of Succession.

1714: Queen Anne dies, George I coronated. The ring bayonet replaces the plug bayonet.

1714: December: Houyhnhnm Council meets.

1715: Scottish Jacobite rebellion in favour of James II. Riots in London and West Country.

1715, 15th February, 9am, Lemuel Gulliver leaves Houyhnhnm Land.

1715, 5th November, Lemuel arrives at Lisbon on the ship of Captain Pedro de Mendez.

1715, 25th November, Lemuel leaves Lisbon for England

1715, 5th December, Lemuel arrives at Downs and is home by that afternoon.

1716: The Jacobite rebellion falls apart. James II escapes to Rome becoming a guest of the Pope.

1717: Britain, France and the Netherlands form the Triple Alliance, there is uneasy peace as all eyes nervously watch Spain. King George I expels his son from the royal household.

1718: Austria joins the alliance and the War of the Quadruple Alliance is declared on Spain.

1719: Daniel Defoe publishes Robinson Crusoe. Jacobites defeated at Geln Shiel.

1720: The South Sea's stock bubble. The South Sea Company takes over the national debt. Stocks in the company soar but soon there are no more buyers. Share holders panic and soon the stocks are worthless. The finances of hundreds are ruined. First minister Walpole acts to restore calm. End of the War of the Quadruple Alliance

1721: Walpole now 'runs' England. The first 'Prime Minister' though that title does not exist for many years yet.

1722: Death of John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough aged 72 from stroke.

1723: Death of the acclaimed architect and man or reason Sir Christopher Wren, designer of St. Paul's Cathedral.

1724: Hanging of Jack Sheppard notorious robber, thief, and gaolbreaker.

1725: England, France, Hannover & Prussia sign Covenant of Hannover.

1726: First publication of Gulliver's Travels.

1727 April 2: A new edition of Gulliver's Travels includes a letter to his publisher airing grievances about changes made to the manuscript.

1728: Lemuel Gulliver publishes his extended work detailing Lilliput.

1729: Lemuel Gulliver publishes his treaty on the manners and virtues of the houyhnhnms. Herman Moll produces an updated map of the world featuring the discoveries of Lemuel Gulliver.

1730, 30 June: present day.

FUSTING BASH UNLIMITED EDITION

by Dr. Samara

This was originally published as a series of posts on rpg.net

I Can't Keep From Fusting With BASH UE. And that must mean I really like it since I only play around with stuff I like (if I didn't like it, I wouldn't bother). In my opinion, the biggest issue with BASH is the apparent lack of consistency. For me, game design should hew to the Hellenic concept of kallos; beautiful symmetry. I believe that a lot of the inconsistency in BASH only needs a little work to fix; the kallos can be coaxed out without too much work. But it is there, all across the board.

For some minor examples, let's look at terminology. The use of "Active Multiplier" and "Damage Multiplier" is a bit confusing, since they essentially refer to the same thing. Further, a times 2 multiplier is written both as "x2" and as "2DM". There's also something very inconsistent in the terms "Dice Bonus" and "Result Bonus"; these are analogous

operations wherein a number is added to the dice before they are multiplied and after they are multiplied, respectively. But "Dice Bonus" makes it sound as if you are getting extra dice and doesn't mirror the word "Result". Personally, I'd call them "Roll Bonus" and "Result Bonus".



That might all seem pretty pedantic. After all, that stuff could all be solved by a Find-and-Replace operation. But it's characteristic and that easy fix isn't always workable. Let me pick an example that I just noticed the other day: the advantages Appeal and Frightening Presence. Both gives a +2 Multiplier Bonus to Mind for purposes of being...well, appealing or frightening. Now, that's fine, but I can't figure out why these get set out as Advantages, when you have a power designed specifically to handle these kind of specializations (Boost).

Sticking with Advantages, let's look at Versatile, Quick-Thinking, and Never Surrender. Mechanically, all three of these allow a hero to make use of one specific aspect of a Hero Die once an issue without spending the actual Die. I'm a big fan of this idea, but it wasn't obvious to me that this is what was going on until I read it a few times. More, there are 3 other uses of Hero Dice that logically ought to pop up here. Myself, I would have grouped all these together into a little category of advantages and explained what was going on under the hood (BASH is normally excellent at making such

things clear so it's absence stings a bit here).

Now, I'll stop with the big one: Powers. Specially, Power Categories. BASH divvies up powers into seven categories: Movement, Combat, Bio-Manipulation, Intense Training, Mastery, Mental, and Perception Powers. As above, it took me a while to figure out what was bothering me here; eventually I realized that it was the lack of consistency between categorizing powers based on Cause and on Effect.

Combat Powers, for example, are Effects-based. Special Attack is Effects-based: it's literally any straight-up attack that isn't a standard piece of equipment or a punch in the kisser. Thor's hammer, Cyclop's optic blast, and even the Hulk's shock-wave attack would all fall into this power (although the latter should probably be a stunt, except that RAW doesn't allow stunts off of Abilities such as Brawn). Conversely, Mind Spikes is about as cause-specific a power as I can think of. By and large, Powers are categorized by cause except for combat.

I think you gotta pick one or the other here. IMO, I prefer to have cause-based categories, with effects-based powers within. I think it works nicely to have, for example, an Energy Powers category with energy attacks, fields, etc. therein and a different Body Powers category with body attacks, armour, etc.. But that's just one way to do it.

Disadvantages

Disadvantages, Weaknesses, and Mental Malfunction are all absorbed into 1 category which I'll call "Disadvantages" for no really good reason. With a few exceptions, they do not give CP's; instead, they give Hero Points when they create problems for the hero.

The Weakness group of Disads includes:

* Power Negation: Something can turn off your powers, including reducing Brawn and Agility to mundane levels (x2). Get 2 HP's in each scene when you are rendered powerless.

* Vulnerability: You take double damage from a certain kind of attack (that attack gets to double its result before you roll Soak). Get 2 HP's when you are first hit by a attack to which you are vulnerable. Note that the attack can be of any kind, so that it can also be a Weaken or Daze, for example. You can increase the Vulnerability, so that you get 3 HP's if the attack gets to triple its damage Result and so on.

* Susceptibility: You take x3 damage from some usually harmless substance or situation. Get 2 HP's in each scene when you are hurt by this. You can increase the Susceptibility, so that you get 3 HP's if you take x4 damage and so on.

Any or all of these weaknesses can be combined. Superman has both Power Negation and Susceptibility to Green Kryptonite and would get 4 HP's when the rock comes out (Silver Age Supes also had a Vulnerability to magic attacks). A Vampire's aversion to light could be represented both by a Susceptibility (Sunlight) and by a Vulnerability to light-based attacks.

The point with most Disads is that you get HP's when the Disad makes it harder to be an effective hero. I don't want to type that over and over but that is what I mean when I type "makes trouble". Super-heroes are supposed to fight super-villains, so a Disad which results in you fighting a bad guy does not usually trigger the HP bonus. On the other hand, if

the issue is about trying to stop a ticking time-bomb and, just as you are about to deactivate it, your Arch-foe shows up to kick you and you can't really fight back because you are trying to disarm this bomb - well, that counts. Use those HP's to help you with your Technology/Sabotage roll!

Basically, get 1 HP when the Disad makes trouble and get 2 HP when the Disad makes big trouble. Yeah, the group's gotta figure out what that means. This applies to all of the following Disads: Arch-Enemy, Destitute, Freak, Hidden Powers, Involuntary Change, Relationship, On The Run, Outsider, Public ID, Rogue's Gallery, Secret, Social Stigma, Uncontrollable Powers, and Ward

Of the existing Disads, the following changes:

- * Age is changed to Kid: Get HP when being a kid makes trouble. I'm ditching the other version because Hits don't really represent toughness in this game, but rather narrative importance. That's why Minions get fewer Hits. If you want a frail character, take a Brawn x0 so that you get a crummy Soak roll.

- * Normal is changed to Mundane Form: Get HP when something prevents you from assuming your super-form. This Disad does not apply to guys deprived of their gadgets as in RAW, since that will be covered by the reworked Gadget Limitation and by the Secret Disad (which prevents them from obviously carrying around their batarangs).

- * Unskilled grants 1 CP.

- * Susceptibility is changed to Lowered Ability: Get 1 CP in exchange for -1 Multiplier Penalty to one Ability in a specific situation. This mirrors the new Heightened Ability power, which replaced the old Boost (Circumstantial).

Mental Malfunction...honestly, I don't know whether to keep the name or not. It's funny, but not sure whether that's good or not. In an article of BAM that gave a random roll CharGen, MM is replaced by Motive, which is implied by the RAW as the usual malfunction. For now, I'm calling it Mental Quirk and, like other Disads, saying you get HP when it makes trouble for you.

So, all in all, my remix version gives us a type of stat called Disadvantages, with categories: Weakness Disads, Troubling Disads, and Penalty Disads. They break down like this:

Penalty Disads (get CP for less than usual competence); Lowered Ability, Unskilled

Troubling Disads (get HP for causing trouble for the hero); Arch-Enemy, Destitute, Freak, Hidden Powers, Involuntary Change, Kid, Mental Quirk, Mundane Form, On The Run (might rename to "Wanted"), Outsider, Public ID, Relationship, Rogue's Gallery, Secret, Social Stigma, Uncontrollable Powers, Ward

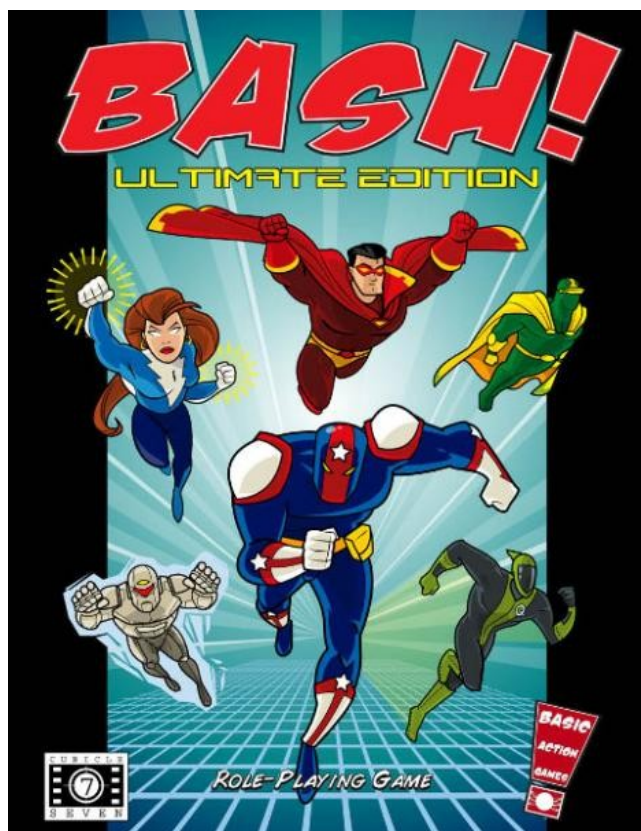
Weakness Disads (get HP when you are hurt or weakened); Power Negation, Susceptibility, Vulnerability

Advantages

I'm finding Advantages a bit trickier than Disads. I'll be using the alternate suggestion in the Appendix for buying with CP instead of with Disads (let me just say again that BASH almost always does an excellent job of discussion what's going on under the hood and how you could change it).

As alluded to above, both Appeal and Frightening Presence are subsumed into a new Advantage called Heightened (Ability): One Ability functions with a Multiplier Bonus in a specific type of situation or circumstance. The cost is 1 CP per +1 Multiplier Bonus (which I'm beginning to realize needs an abbreviation!). There should be a list of suggested, genre-appropriate examples for all 3 stats.

I think Celebrity probably becomes a type of Heightened Mind, although I'm still considering how it intersects with the Fame mechanic (a mechanic I really, really like).



I also mentioned before how I want to add the other uses of the Hero Die as Advantages, along the lines of Versatile and Quick-Thinking.

Dumb Luck is replaced by Lucky: Once per issue, without spending a Hero Die, you automatically succeed on any skill check, or automatically get a 20 on an untrained skill. In the case of an extended check, you automatically get a result as if you had rolled a "20" on 2d6.

Nick of Time: Once per issue, without spending a Hero Die, you enter a scene you were previously not in. You can instead use this to bring your Sidekick or Super Vehicle to you.

Puts The Super in Hero: Once per issue, without spending a Hero Die, you may roll another die and add it to your regular 2d6 roll. If this die matches either of the other two, it counts as doubles, and you may roll another die and add it, continuing until the last die rolled doesn't match.

Gadgeteer seems too restrictive to me. First, it calls for too many rolls; just pick the most appropriate skill and

make that roll. Second, I'd clarify that this is an extended check; not a case of succeeding/failing, but rather of how long it takes (of course Dr. Genius can make an Alodium Q-38 Space-Modulator, but can he do it in time?). I haven't quite worked this out yet, but I think the difficulty of the roll might equal the total number of points involved +1 x10 (so whipping up a 2-pt gadget is difficulty 30). Each skill roll is 1 hour, so if you are in a hurry, you might need to use HP's (which is what they are for anyway, right?).

In my experience, Headquarters are usually more of a convenience than actually doing something for the hero. I'd definitely add that teams can pool points on HQ's; otherwise, it's the sole property of the hero who bought it and no one else gets to benefit from its powers (the difference between the Watchtower and the Bat-Cave). I think I would scale

them so that each point put into the Advantage gives you 1/4 your CP to spend on powers. I'm not 100% on the figure yet, but I want a scale rather than a flat amount.

Immortality. Tough because how often is that really anything more than flavour in a super-hero comic? Combat is rarely fatal in comics and anybody who does die is fair game to be resurrected somehow. I believe I'll drop it. I had started a lot of this thinking in a thread where I tried to give some very specific comparisons of BASH and ICONS. In there, I mentioned making Immortality a power. Seeing that again, I think that may be the way to go. I can see times where it would be more than just flavour; actually, I keep thinking of some guy whose whole schtick is that he swallows bombs and jumps into nuclear reactors and stuff (Bobo the Destructible Man!). But it definitely should be a Power i.e. subject to Negation or Copycat.

Instant Change also seems flavoury to me. If finding a phone booth turns out to be problem in the story, then that triggers the Secret Disad; if you don't have your super-suit, that trigger the Gadget Limitation. Also probably axed.

Leadership: I'm only listing this because I like it so much. Definitely stays.

Resources gets renamed Multi-Millionaire because the former is so bland and doesn't suggest the full extent of the thing. The Advantage is not that you have resources, but that you are stinking rich. No half-measures.

Sidekicks and Super Vehicles present questions of scaling similar to Headquarters. RAW, Sidekicks get 3/4 the CPs as you, while Vehicles get 5 less (and HQ's get 1/2). Consistency was how I started this thing and here's a place it is badly needed. Maybe all three gives you a base/car/Boy Wonder built of 1/4 your CP for each point put in. So, if you really wanted, you could spend 4 pts and get a sidekick the equal of you (I can't imagine anyone actually wanting to do that, but that's another matter). Alternately, you could spend fewer points and have your HQ/Vehicle/Pet take Setbacks.

Big change: all of the abilities that are currently Intensive Training powers go into the Advantages. They aren't powers since they shouldn't normally be subject to the effects of Nullify or Copycat.

Attack Weak Point is going to go, I think. I'll post later about my new, consistent Combat Mechanics, but, in a nutshell, I think that Called Shot already covers the first part of this ability and I'm making attack roll equal the damage roll standard which removes the point of the second part of the ability. I might make the idea here an example of the Advantage Heightened Mind (Head Shot).

Disarm Expert will probably be similar (Heightened Mind (Disarm), although that wouldn't address the second part of the ability (which is to retroactively declare a disarm when you rolled high enough to do so). I kind of like that one.

I must say that Martial Arts in BASH give me the heebie-jeebies. They are just so...all over the map. And the cost thing is weird. A number of the benefits could be covered by Heightened Ability, such as bonuses to Priority or to Soak from HTH-attacks. But others are more complex (Grappling, I looking at you). I really gotta think more here.

There seem to be an awful lot of extra attacks ability in this category: 4 out of 10 Intense Training powers are about

getting an extra attack. And, in each case, they work differently. Off-Hand Shooting gives you 2 shots at -2 roll each for 2 points; Paired Weapons gives you 2 swipes at -1 penalty for 2 points, and Swift Strike gives you pretty much the same but can be stacked onto Paired Weapons; Double Taps, on the other hand, gives you 2 shots at no penalty for only 1 point, but you can't move or do anything else.

I see the idea that getting extra missile attacks is better than HTH (I presume that's why the roll penalty is harsher for OH Shooting) and the idea that this could be countered by losing the option of other actions. I think I can redo all of this as two separate things: a maneuver that anyone can do and an Advantage. I'll discuss the former when I get to Combat Maneuvers; the latter I'll do now:

Extra Attack: Gives you 1 additional attack per panel, each at -2. Specify HTH Attacks (costs 1 CP) or Ranged Attacks (costs 2 CP).

Maneuver - Attack Twice: The Result Penalty is the number of total attacks x10. So, if you want to attack twice in one panel, the Result Penalty to both attacks -20. This does not interact with the Domino Effect, but is only useful for attacking significant foes.

Skillful: I'm still deciding whether to change skills to straight point-buy or not. If so, this becomes irrelevant. If not; it stays as is.

Weapon Technique is much like Martial Arts - just too damn complex for what it really does and inconsistent with other mechanics. Basically, it lets you improve your chance to hit or to do damage. That part could all be simulated by Heightened Ability (Agility to hit; Brawn to damage). The default that would be something like Heightened Agility (HTH Attacks) or Heightened Agility (Ranged Attacks). If you wanted to limit it to a specific type of weapon, such as swords, that would half the cost of the Heightened, so Slashy the Swordsmaster could get Heightened Agility (Swords) +2M for 1 CP. The new Combat Maneuvers which I keep promising will let you exchange attack for damage, so that covers that aspect.

Basic Dice Mechanics

First, I am eliminating separate "to hit" and "damage" rolls. Roll the dice once and apply the appropriate multiplier to see if you hit; if so, apply the relevant multiplier to the same roll to see how much damage you do. Thus, if you are punching, you apply your Agility to see if you hit and your Brawn to see how much damage you do. I love packing more info into dice rolls and, in so doing, reducing time taken up in rolling; BASH's core mechanic lets you do this and still have variety of results because of the different multipliers involved.

Second, if you read enough BASH, you can see that there is a mostly consistent mechanic whereby you can do cool stuff if you require yourself to make a roll by 10+. Called Shot is the most common occurrence of this. But it comes up again and again, with variation each time. I'm going to replace that with a consistent and scalable mechanic that I don't have a name for yet, but will call Maneuver for right now.

Maneuver: voluntary accept a Result Penalty before you roll in exchange for a corresponding result Bonus if you

succeed. The minimum penalty is -10, but can be increased (only in increments of 10?).

Head Shot (or Gut Shot or whatever): At its most basic, a successful maneuver grants the penalty back as a result Bonus. So, if you take a -10 to your attack result and hit, then you get +10 for damage result. If Daredevil (A3 B2) wants to really wallop Turk, he declares a Head Shot at -10 and then rolls. He gets a $7 \times 3 = 21 - 10 = 11$. Turk's defense is only 7 so that's a hit. DD's damage is $7 \times 2 = 14 + 10 = 24$.

Tricky Move: For every -10, you get 1 point of a power. For example, if you take -10, you get 1 point of Push instead of doing damage. This would represent a mighty aikido throw, for example. Powers subject to GM vetting, of course.

Baiting: Essentially, the defensive version of a Called Shot, in which you make the enemy attack something he didn't mean to. Take the result penalty to your Defense Roll and, if you succeed, he hits the target of your choosing; hilarity ensues. -10 is required to have him hit something big and obvious (like a load-bearing wall); -20 to hit something man-sized (like his partner); and -30 to hit something small (like an electrical junction box).

Disarm: substitute 10 pts of the usual Maneuver Damage Bonus to forcing the possessor to contest the damage result or do damage to the item. Thus, if you take a -20 to your attack result, you can still get a +10 to the damage result for purposes of disarming or breaking the item.

Powers

Alright, enough dancing around it: let's deal with powers. This is a complex one and I fully expect to come back and redo this. More than once.

First up is redoing the categories. As I mentioned at the beginning, there is inconsistency in how powers are categorized. They are mostly arranged by cause (Mental Powers include attacks, defenses, senses, etc.) except where they are arranged by effect (notably, Combat Powers except when they come from intense training). I'm going to categorize everything by effect, based up the following types of effects:

Alter (Self) ; Attack ; Control (Others) ; Defend ; Move ; Sense

And for those keeping track at home: yup, those are the categories from ICONS. For me, this is the simplest way to categorize powers if there is no random roll table involved (which is a whole other kettle of powers that I ain't getting into right now). Even with a basic scheme like this, though, it is sometimes difficult to decide which way to go with a power. For example: is Weaken an Alter or an Attack? In these cases, I stick closely to the intent of the effect: the usual intent of Weaken is to beat someone in a fight, so it is categorized as an Attack Power. OTOH, while you can use Mind Control in a fight, it's has much broader intent, so I put it in Control Powers.

I also have to get pretty pedantic here about parts of speech. I think the names of powers need to be in the same part-of-speech throughout. Right now, some are verbs (Nullify), some are gerunds (Summoning), and some are nouns (Teleportation). I'm going with verbs where possible (changing Animation to Animate for example). A few other

changes are to bring the names out of left field; why use the personal noun “telepath” instead of the normal “telepathy”? Also: Ghost Form? Really?

As to the actual powers included, a few Advantages get brought into the power list (Immortality and Alter Ego) and a whole category goes into Advantages (Intense Training). Some powers get folded into others (Hover, Glide, and Water-Walking all become variations on Fly (which is the renamed version of Flight for pedantic reasons given above)). I know that some folk have commented that they like having some redundant powers “pre-built” as it were. “Sure”, they say, “Glide is limited form of Fly, but it saves me the trouble of building a Glide power with Limitations”. Fair enough as far as it goes: my intent is that all those power are pre-built as examples within the main power. So, I would rewrite Fly to discuss common variations, such as Glide. Having and eating cake, as it were.

A few other powers just go away because they are so obscure I just don’t see it, such as Omni-Reader and Mind Spikes. Actually, both of those last two can be redone - Omni-Reader is just an incredibly narrow Mastery power (Reading Mastery), while Mind Spikes is just a mental iteration of Damage Shield. Maybe similar, Mind Shield as written goes away (to become an example of Heightened Mind), but is replaced by a variation of Force Shield, which protects multiple folks against mental attacks instead of physical. In the same way, Damage Shield goes away to become an example of a linked power (Force Shield/Special Attack).

Alter Powers (Alter Ego, Boost, Copy (inc. Skill Mimic), Duplicate, Extra Limbs, Grow, Heal, Intangibility (inc. Astral Projection, -Liquid (1 CP), -Gas (2 CP), -Ghost (3 CP), -Astral (4 CP), Invisibility, Shape-Shift (inc. Mimic), Shrink, Stretch, -Skills, -Powers, -Disadvantages)

Attack Powers (Confuse, Continual Damage, Damage Aura (inc. Damage Field), Daze, Immobilize, Nullify, Slow, Special Attack, Weaken)

Control Powers (Animate, Create Object, Dominate, Illusion, Master X, Memory Tamper, Restore, Summon, Telekinesis (inc. Push), Transmute, Suggest)

Defend Powers (Armour, Deflect, Force Shield (inc. Damage Shield), Immortality, Resist X (inc. Immunity), -Half-damage (.5 CP), -Immunity (1 CP))

Move Powers (Burrow/Swim, Cling, Fly (inc. Hover, Glide, & Water-Walk), Jump, Run, Swing, Teleport)

Sense Powers (Clairvoyance, Danger Sense, Super Sense (inc. X-Ray Vision), Keen Sense, Interface, Scan, Sense, Telepathy, -Empathy (1 CP), -ESP (2 CP), -Broadcast Telepathy (3 CP))

Stats as Powers: Stats of x3 and greater are super-powers and function accordingly, meaning that you can Stunt off of them, they can be affected by Nullify, and so on. The RAW are totally silent on this issue. Nothing says you can't consider super-stats as powers, but nothing suggests that you should either (unless I've totally missed a reference somewhere, but I have looked). In my hack, they are powers.

Brawn of x3+ is an excellent source of stunting a Burst, Special Attack (Shockwave or even the Hulk's colossal roar).

Agility x3+ could stunt Deflect pretty easily, while Mind x3+ could stunt super-senses.

By the same token, any of those could be copied by Copycat or reduced by Nullify down to a x2. Now, you could get into some arguments on that last point. I note that Mutants & Masterminds has really gone all over the map through years on how to handle this point. The argument is that some species simply possess ultra-terrene abilities and they aren't "super-powers" as such; having such things be subject to Nullify would be like saying that you could drain normal people's normal Brawn, Agility, or Mind.

In my view, that gets a bit too far into "realism" for a super-hero game. Comics have been pretty consistent over the years that super-stats are functionally powers and subject to the same rules. That's good enough for me. I guess, if it really mattered, you could add an Enhancement called something like Mundane that lets the stat be treated otherwise and thus not subject to Nullification. You could even layer things so that, for example, you have an Asgardian hero, who has super-powered strength on top of his people's normal super strength. He gets to buy Brawn of x2 as normal (2 CP per), then buys 1 more with the Enhancement Mundane (2+1=3 CP), and then 2 more as straight-powers because he wields the thunder-hammer (2 CP per). Thunder-Guy has Brawn x5, which cost him 11 CP (rather than the usual 10); in exchange, if someone tries to Nullify his Brawn, it can be reduced to x3 but no lower, proving that a depowered Asgardian is still a tough cookie.

Example Character: The Rook

So, I've been playing a bit of DCA with my group. I got in late and they handed me a pre-built character: the Rook. He's clearly supposed to be the Batman-type (although, I have to say that I quite enjoy that he is, in fact, Marvel's Nighthawk Mk I). Since I just played the Rook last night, I thought I'd give a go at statting him up in BASH-F (the F is for Fiendish!).

The Rook

Stats [12] Brawn x2 [4] Agility x2 [4] Mind x2 [4]

Powers [12] Wings (Fly 2): 50', Limitation: Wings Can be Grappled [1] Cowl (Limitation: Gadget, Fragile)[2] Extended Sight (Keen Sense 1): x5 vision checks Low-Light Vision (Super Senses 2) Radio Hearing (Super Senses 1) Throwing Talons (Multi-Power) [9] Flash Talon (Confusion 1): -2 Agility, 65' Range (Mid, +3) 10 Targets (+3), Gadget: 3 Charges per scene (-1) [6] Exploding Talon (Special Attack 1): x3 damage, 65' Range (Mid, +3) 10 Targets (+3), Gadget: 3 Charges per scene (-1) [6] Taser Talon (Weaken Agility 4): 65' Range (Mid, +3), Gadget: 3 Charges per scene (-1) [6] Razor Talon (Special Attack 3): x4 damage, x5 attack, 65' Range (Mid, +3) Ricochet (+1), Gadget: 3 Charges per scene (-1) [6]

Advantages[16] Extra Attack: +1 Ranged Attack, each at -2 Roll [2] Heightened Agility: HTH Combat +2M, Ranged +2M [4] Heightened Brawn: HTH Combat +2M [2] The Roost (Headquarters)[1] Multi-Millionaire [1] Skillful: +12 skill slots [6]

Skills Agility x2 Athletics x3/Acrobatics Stealth/Shadowing Mind x2 Commerce/Finance Computers x3/Hacking Deception x3/Detect Deception Investigation x4/Gut Security x4/Surveillance Streetwise/Crime Technology/Invent

Combat HTH x4, x4 Dam Ranged x4 Soak x2, x4 in HTH Priority x4 in HTH or Ranged Defense x4 Soak x2, x4 HTH

Total Cost: 40

The only thing a bit tricky in that was the Throwing Talons. The example in the book of the Archer and the master Crime-Fighter all use Special Attack with the Variable Enhancement more than I did. I could have done so with the Razor and Exploding Talons, but the cost would have been the same (7 pts for the Variable, +1 each for the Flash and Taser = 9).



It occurs to me that another way to do this would be to buy the Special Attack with Variable Enhancement and then just Stunt the Flash and Taser Talons. I guess that would be Special Attack 7. That would save 2 points, although I would probably want to buy the Versatile Advantage, so it would all be pretty close.

I also decided that, going from the sidebar on p. 73 about Jaguar Woman, I could split the cost of Super Senses into a 2-pt, with a Limitation, and a 1-pt combined with the 1-pt Enhanced, with the Limitation. Not quite RAW, but I think that is the intent.

Note that, as I expected, the costs is somewhat higher than is assumed in the RAW, since I had to pay for all those Advantages. Still, he costs 40 pts as opposed to 36 for the Master Crime Fighter, so it's still in the right range. I'm going to try a few others and see, but I wouldn't wonder if the point totals for each scale need to increase by a few points in this hack (maybe World Class becomes 45 pts instead of 40).

AD&D DRUID SPELLS FOR THE HERO SYSTEM

by Michael Cole

The following is a conversion article from a range of Druid spells from 1st and 2nd edition Advanced Dungeons & Dragons to the Hero System (4th edition). The total points for each spell is calculated to be around 23-25 real points to make incorporation in power frameworks easier.

Alarm Sense Hostile Creature (Err on the side of caution) 5 Perception +16 32 Ranged 5 Discriminatory 5 360 Degree 10 Trigger (Creature enters range, and does not give password) 0.5 [Using Special Senses - only for trigger] 1 Extra Time (1 Turn) 1 Only where plants grow 0.25 Concentrate (1/2 DCV) 0.25

Base Points 57 Active Points 86 Total Points 24

Animal Friendship Presence Attack +8d6 40 Only for "Positive" Reactions 0.25 Only on Natural Creatures 0.5

Base Points 40 Active Points 40 Total Points 23

Animal Form [20] Multiform - Tundra Wolf 20 [10] Multiform - Eurasian Lynx 10 [10] Multiform - Honey Badger 10 [10] Multiform - Eurasian Otter 10 6 Charges 0.75 Concentrate (1/2 DCV) 0.25 Full Phase 0.5

Base Points 60 Active Points 60 Total Points 24

Animal Growth Growth (Double Size) 15 Usable Against Others 1 Difficult to Dispel (2 levels) 0.5 Continuous 1 Ranged 0.5 Uncontrolled 0.5 Charges (6) 0.75 Extra Time (Full Phase) 0.5 Only on Natural Creatures 0.5

Base Points 15 Active Points 68 Total Points 25

Animal Companion Points Aid 2d6 INT, 2d6 EGO 20 Fade Rate Reduction 1pt / Year 2.5 Difficult to Dispel (2 levels) 0.5 Charges (6) 0.75 Extra Time (1 Turn) 1 Only on Natural Creatures 0.5

Base Points 20 Active Points 80 Total Points 25

Banishment Points Mind Control 11d6 50 3 Continuing (1 Hour) charges 0 Single Command - Leave/Stay Away from Here 1

Base Points 50 Active Points 50 Total Points 25

Barkskin Armour (10PD + 10ED Resistant) 30 Density Increase 5 x2 Mass, +5 STR, -1" KB, (1PD + 1ED Non-Resistant) Running -3" -6 Comeliness -8 -4

Base Points 25 Active Points 25 Total Points 25

Call Lightning Energy Blast (14d6) (Electricity) 70 6 Recoverable Charges 0.25 Only works in natural storm 1.5

Base Points 70 Active Points 70 Total Points 25

Call (Natural) Storm Change Environment 5 500 m Radius 45 Difficult to Dispel 0.25 Uncontrolled 0.5 Charges (8)
0.5 Extra Time (5 Minutes) 2

Base Points 50 Active Points 88 Total Points 25

Summon Ent Summon Ent (Large Sentient Tree) (250pts) 60 Mindcontrol of Above 40 Charges (1) 2 Extra Time
(Full Phase) 0.5 OIF (Small Staff) 0.5 Gesture (Planting staff in ground) 0.25

Base Points 100 Active Points 100 Total Points 24

Detect Pits, Snares and Traps Enhanced Sense 5 Ranged 5 Discriminatory 5 Knowledge Traps (Skill) +1 5
Perception +2 4

Base Points 24 Active Points 24 Total Points 24

Entangle (I) 3d6 Entangle 30 Area Effect (3 Hex Radius) 1 Personal Immunity 0.25 Continuous 1 Activation (11-)
1 Extra Time (1 Turn) 1 Only where large plants grow 1

Base Points 30 Active Points 98 Total Points 24

Entangle (II) 3d6 Drain SPD 30 Area Effect (3 Hex Radius) 1 Personal Immunity 0.25 Continuous 1 Activation
(11-) 1 Extra Time (1 Turn) 1 Only where large plants grow 1

Base Points 30 Active Points 98 Total Points 24

Fire Seeds RKA 3d6 (Energy - Fire) 45 Explosion 0.5

Base Points 45 Active Points 68 Total Points 68

RKA 1 point (Energy - Fire) 5 Continuous 1 Sticky 0.5 Uncontrolled 0.5 Linked to Above 0.5

Base Points 5 Active Points 15 Total Points 10

[For Both]

Activation (15-) 0.25 Charges (6) 0.75 OIF (Acorn), Breakable, Universal 0.5 Does not work in water 0.25
Gestures (Throwing) 0.35

Base Points 78 Active Points 78 Total Points 25

Fire Trap RKA 2d6+1 (Energy - Fire) 3 Explosion 0.5

Base Points 35 Active Points 53 Total Points 53

RKA 1 point (Energy - Fire) 5 Continuous 1 Sticky 0.5 Uncontrolled 0.5 Linked to Above 0.5

Base Points 5 Active Points 15 Total Points 10

Trigger (Object is opened without password) 0.5 Concentrate (0 DCV) 0.5 Extra Time (1 Turn) 1 No Range 0.5 Does not work in water 0.25 OIF (Something that can open and close) 0.5

Base Points 63 Active Points 94 Total Points 25



Flame Strike RKA 4d6 (Energy - Fire) 60 Area Effect (5 Hex Radius) 1 Indirect (from Above) 0.25

Base Points 60 Active Points 135 Total Points 135

RKA 1 point (Energy - Fire) 5 Continuous 1 Sticky 0.5 Uncontrolled 0.5 Linked to Above 0.5

Base Points 5 Active Points 15 Total Points 10

[For Both]

Charges (2) 1.5 with END Cost 0.5 Concentrate (0 DCV) 0.5 Gestures 0.25 Incantation 0.25 Increased END (x3 - 15 total) 1 Does not work in water 0.25 Only whilst in the Open 0.5

Base Points 145 Active Points 145 Total Points 25

Insect Plague 1d6 RKA 15 Area Effect - 4" Radius (Double) 1.25 Indirect (Originates on site) 0.75 Penetrating 0.5

Personal Immunity 0.25 5 Continuing (5 Minute) charges 0.25 Extra Time (1 Turn) 1 Does not work in water 0.25 No Knockback 0.25

Base Points 15 Active Points 60 Total Points 24

Healing Points 5d6 Aid 25 Any Characteristic 2 Only to Starting Values 0.5 Concentrate (0 DCV) 0.5 Extra Time (1 Minute) 1.5 Requires Gestures 0.25 Requires Skill Roll (Paramedic) 0.5 Paramedic (15-) 9

Base Points 34 Active Points 102 Total Points 24

Pass through Vegetation Desolidification 40 Concentrate (1/2 DCV) 0.25 Only through plant material 0.5 Extra Time (1 Phase) 0.5

Base Points 40 Active Points 40 Total Points 18

Life Support (Breathing) 10 Linked to Above 0.5

Base Points 10 Active Points 10 Total Points 7

Base Points 24 Active Points 24 Total Points 24

Reincarnate Points 10d6 Transform (Major) - Corpse into Live Creature 150 All or Nothing - Major Event to Change Back Limited Class - Animal 0.25 No Range 0.5 Activation 14- 0.5 Single Charge 2 Uses END 0.5 Extra Time

(1 Hour) 2.5 Only works on the Recently (< 1 Day) Dead 0.5

Base Points 150 Active Points 188 Total Points 25

Rust Points 3d6 Transform (Minor) - Metal into Rust 30 Cumulative 0.5 Full Phase 0.5 No Range 0.5

Base Points 30 Active Points 45 Total Points 23

Speak with Animals 6d6 Telepathy 30 Reduced Endurance (0 END) 0.5 Only on Natural Creatures 0.5 Incantation - Must converse 0.25 Reduced Range 0.25

Base Points 30 Active Points 45 Total Points 23

Speak with Plants Retrocognition (Sight & Sound, 225" Range) 50 Reduced Endurance (1 END) 0.25 Extra Time (1 Turn) 1 Only where plants grow 0.25 Concentrate (1/2 DCV) 0.25

Base Points 50 Active Points 62 Total Points 25

Sunspear Ranged Killing Attack 4d6 (Energy - Plasma) 60 Indirect (from the Sun) 0.25 Armour Piercing 0.5 OCV +4 25 Charges (1) 2 with END Cost 0.5 Concentrate (1/2 DCV) 0.25 Extra Time - Full Phase 0.5 Gestures 0.25 Incantation 0.25 Does not work in water 0.25 Only whilst in the Open 0.5 Only in Daylight 0.25 No Knockback 0.25

Base Points 85 Active Points 149 Total Points 25



Wood Shape 4d6 Transform (Minor) - Wood object into Different Shape 40 Full Phase 0.5 Concentrate (1/2 DCV) 0.25

Base Points 40 Active Points 40 Total Points 23

CUNNING COHORTS BUILD CHARACTER : FOUR GM TIPS

by Johnn Four

An RPT reader asked me for tips about handling followers. This tricky territory is just now emerging in my Riddleport campaign. Following are three tips for getting more mileage out of followers, plus some advice on how to tie followers better into your plots and campaigns.

Give Them Family, Friends, Contacts, And Enemies

For gameplay, give a follower at least a few relationships. This provides you more great fodder for plot hooks and encounter seeds. Better yet, it adds depth to what is often a one-dimensional NPC type.

For flavour and immersion, give NPCs their own lives. On the surface, life might seem to be about tangible things, starting from food and shelter and then moving to toys and status symbols. The true measure of a life, however, is a person's relationships. And so it is with NPCs, too.

An NPC with existing relationships will have carved a place in the world long before the PCs came along. That place might be big or small. Regardless, it makes the NPC seem real, and less like a tool, servant, or slave.

Use relationships to give players pause before abusing a follower or taking him for granted. Ensure the NPC will be missed if he dies or disappears. Better yet, if powerful people take notice, then the characters will be held accountable to the NPC, causing the group problems if he is killed or abused.

In times of trouble, the follower should rely on people other than the PCs for advice and help. In times of success, the NPC should want to share with, brag to, or help others. In this way, you introduce other NPCs for plots and encounters in a believable, seamless, fun way.

Potential relationships:

Parents and grandparents

Siblings

Sons and daughters

Former trainers, teachers, and mentors

Past and present rivals and enemies



Former patrons and employers

Romantic partners

Others who need the NPC

The enemy of a follower will likely become the enemy of the PCs.

Also, complications in relationships do not need to always turn into side quests or lengthy encounters. Even a one minute situation adds a lot to a game session.

Be sure to offer a few boons resulting from a follower's relationships as well, to balance things out and not make players feel penalized.

The great thing about followers with relationships external to the party is you have control of all the other NPCs, so you can impose checks and balances, challenges and fairness.

Give Them Feelings

In the game system I run, characters can gain the ability to attract loyal followers. One interpretation of that is the henchmen are only loyal to the PC they've chosen to follow. In addition, the PC is not a king or god who commands fanatics.

This offers up several interesting possibilities:

The follower's loyalty must be continually earned.

The NPC chose the PC, not the other way around. Unless the PC has a number of supplicants to choose from, the GM gets to pick the follower.

The follower is loyal to their chosen PC – not to other PCs, nor the group.

I see you rubbing your hands together and I hear your evil cackle. I join you. While you do not want henchmen to steal the spotlight away from player characters too much, and you do not want to nerf a character's hard-earned rewards, you should always try to make life interesting for PCs.

For example, a character abuses his cohort. He names the NPC Pit Finder, gives him latrine duty every day, and uses him for +2 cover during battle. After awhile, the NPC snaps. As he should. Who would put up with that for long?

Instead of letting the NPC fade into the background and being abused this way, you have him stand up for himself.

Some ideas:

He confronts the PC. Good roleplaying opportunity. Also reminds the player the NPC is a living, breathing, independent game element.

He hides. The PC will not only lose the NPC's services and benefits, but he might lead a search party resulting in lost time and resources, and causing embarrassment to the character and party.

He switches sides. This one is a doozie. The defection might only be temporary, but it'll sting. The cohort might go on a single mission with a rival, become a double agent, or get a second job for somebody who happens to be unfriendly to the PCs.

Another opportunity is intra-party politics. The follower is loyal to the PC they have chosen. That does not mean loyalty to every PC. The NPC might cause other party members all kinds of trouble.

Imagine a loyal cohort who felt another party member was a threat to his master. What would he or she do? Very interesting possibilities here.

If you take the follower seriously, the player will too. If not, you have lots of ways to show characters the error of their ways.

Give Them A Name Players Will Respect

A respectful name helps NPCs get the respect they deserve. Give a follower a cheesy name and they are doomed to be a party joke. This is fine for one or two NPCs, but a cheeky name should be the exception.

You can use names to enhance campaigns and add flavour. There are a lot of name resources available online.

Treat a follower's name as an opportunity to build your world and improve gameplay.

Prepare a name cheat sheet so you do not get stuck mid-game coming up with a great NPC name.

For my Riddleport campaign, I assigned each world culture an Earth culture, and built name lists based on those cultures. Then I put the names into TableSmith software for easy random generation.

Give Them A Private Agenda

Serving their master should not be the NPC's only motivation. Here are two interesting possibilities for some great gaming.

1) What did they want before becoming the PC's follower?

Give the NPC one or two strong desires that remain unmet when becoming a follower. Have these ambitions come to the fore once in awhile, triggering gameplay opportunities.

Perhaps the NPC takes a strong position during a party debate. Maybe he uses his spare time to kick off an interesting side quest. Or maybe he makes requests of his leader that affects party decisions, for good or bad.

For example:

"I have a chance to meet master sculptor Ardonis in nearby Waterton. I have waited years for this opportunity – he never travels this far south. I'll be back in three days. You won't even miss me."

The PCs may choose to accompany their henchman to Waterton, and get into some fun encounters there. Regardless, the follower falls in love with Ardonis' daughter, and he becomes torn between love and loyalty – an interesting predicament!

2) What new needs, desires, and ambitions do they develop during the campaign?

This offers interesting twists and gameplay potential.

Even getting a new hobby mid-campaign makes players look at a follower as more than a stat block.

But what if the NPC started having feelings of personal ambition? How would he try to steer his leader, or what actions would he take to earn notice amongst others, possibly stealing the spotlight away from the PCs?

Alternatively, though the NPC might remain loyal to his PC leader, he might not feel the same about other party members and followers. Maybe the NPC spies on another PC in exchange for money, secret training, or romantic interests.

Here are a few ideas for interesting private agendas:

Wants to surprise his leader with some great accomplishment, which ends up going awry or actually working against the PC.

Dreams of owning land and settling down with his wife of ten years. This might make him adverse to risk at the wrong times.

Seeks revenge against a lord whose army killed his family. At key times, the NPC's loyalty to the PC competes against opportunities for vengeance.

Wants to change class, but his leader won't let him.

Wants to impress a noble's daughter and some day have enough wealth to win her hand in marriage.

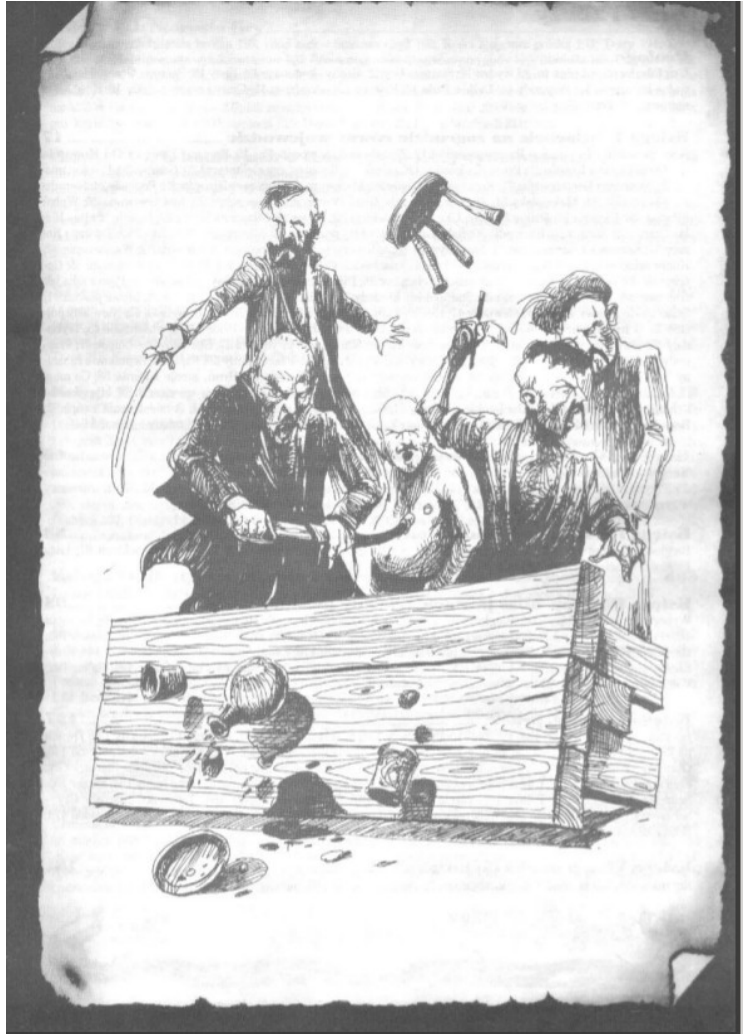
It turns out a PC's friend or family member murdered the follower's brother.

Deluded. He believes in a contrarian prophesy or dream.

Whenever possible, developer followers and cohorts into living, breathing NPCs. Loyalty does not mean without fault or stagnation. Avoid making followers liabilities, and instead design interesting situations that make for fun gaming.

Balance risk, reward, and failure according to the pacing of your campaign.

Guaranteed, nobody will forget gaming with followers such as these.



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THOR: MOVIE REVIEW

by Andrew Moshos

More comic book movies. More Marvel comic book movies! See, the waddling Comic Book Guys of the world don't have enough to entertain themselves with and bitch about across the vast expanse of the tubes of the internets already. There weren't enough goddamn Spider-Men, Supermen, X-Men, Iron Men, Batmen, Hulk Men, Man Men flicks out there stinking up the joint as it was?

Of course it's never going to end because the golden age continues. They make billions of dollars, and they convince grown adults to buy merchandise for themselves to put on their desks at work, without the least amount of shame or reluctance. That's a fucking money spinner, that is. Comic book franchises make money rain from the skies, so it makes sense that the Microsoft of the comics world, being Marvel, invested a shitload of money setting up their own studio to make these delightful and delicious flicks themselves with greater regularity and with more direct profits to themselves.

And thus, Marvel Studios brings us The Mighty Thor!

As tempted as I am to keep ripping the shit out of them and this flick just for the mere fact of their lazy existence, I'm not going to. Mostly, I'm not going to because I actually enjoyed Thor, ridiculous as that seems. Embarrassing as it might be.

Chris Hemsworth as Thor is actually pretty good. Sure, his unfortunate Australian / Kiwi accent leaks through every now and then, but at the very least he has the physical

appearance and presence you need for one of these kinds of capers. Like insecure girls with self-esteem issues, sometimes it comes down to nothing more than a shit-eating grin and a charming manner to get into my good graces. After watching much of the flick with a disbelieving eye, there was a scene where Our Hero carries in from the cold, a comatose-from-booze Stellan Skarsgard. He has such a rascally good natured grin on his face as he says, upon being asked what they got up to, "We drank, we fought, and we honoured our ancestors".



I pretty much gave up disliking it after that. It's not a great flick by any reasonable standard, but for one of these kinds of flicks it's probably as good as it gets. I'm not going to claim it makes any kind of real world sense, since it deals with gods, giant hammers, technologically advanced aliens mistaken for gods and Natalie Portman as an astrophysicist. But as a melange of Norse Mythology and high Flash Gordon-like camp, it didn't make me want to gouge my eyes out or perforate my eardrums, which is as much as I can hope for in this day and age.

Thor (Hemsworth) is an arrogant jerk who swans around with an almost unbearable air of entitlement. Being the son of Odin (Sir Anthony Hopkins) will do that to you, I guess. They all live in an impossibly grand realm called Asgard. They wear shiny, shiny armour, and declaim loudly every time they want to speak about anything, whether it's about the need to attack their enemies, or scratch themselves in an uncomfortable place. Thor has a younger, weedier, magically-inclined brother called Loki (Tom Hiddleston) against whom (though he doesn't know it yet) he is eternally competing against for their father's unattainable approval.

I would imagine that when the father the approval is desperately being sought from is the leader of all the Norse gods, it's always going to be a losing battle. But you keep trying, don't you? Even knowing it's never going to happen, if at all, until it's too late, you still have to try, don't you? It's how we're wired as sons and daughters of those less-than-gods we call our goddamn parents.

So who can fault these mighty (in their own ways) sons for desperately fucking things up in their pursuit of a kind word, or a 'way to go, son', or an 'onya, Sonya'? After Thor and some buddies of his fuck up a whole bunch of ice giants from the Jotunheim realm, 'ice giants' just being the generic and racist term for these differently-abled and scantily clad macro Smurfs, his stern but fair father turfs him out of Asgard, banishing him to the human realm, which I think is called Midgard. And, worst of all, he makes it so Son Number One can't even play with his hammer Mjolnir any more.

On earth he stumbles around New Mexico (I think, or Arizona, or some other generic dry dusty sandy place, which is probably still filmed in Canada) and friends things up with a bunch of scientists. Natalie Portman is a Harvard graduate, so perhaps it's not that much of a stretch for her to play a highly intelligent person who screams about Einstein – Rosen bridges at the top of her perky lungs. I'm not sure, though, if I buy her as an astrophysicist. Stellan Skarsgard can sell anything, though, from any film role in cinematic history to a vacuum cleaner as far as I'm concerned, so he actually does okay as the token person from a Scandinavian background who knows enough of the Norse myths to know how or why Thor couldn't and then could be the person he claims to be.

This is not a deep and meaningful flick. There is the merest patina of characterisation and believability to the proceedings, because these aren't really meaningful characters and, despite Kenneth Branagh's involvement, none of this frippery is raised to the level of what hack lazy reviewers have been calling Shakespearean storytelling. There's no way Slick Willy Spear Shaker would have had this many characters standing around with so little to do or say. There would have been a bunch of thee-s and thou-s thrown around as well.

But you can't fault Branagh for trying. I also applaud him for not turning this into a wall-to-wall generic action fest. I liked that the action set pieces didn't go on for too long, so that we didn't have the kind of numbing excess that what's his name's King Kong remake inspired, or even the duller sections of the two Iron Man flicks, where ironically, the action was less interesting than the other shenanigans the main character got up to.

Reference is made to the Thor character walking around New Mexico in a fish out of water fashion, but considering the way he basically gets along easily in this not-that-strange realm, and can wear a flannel shirt quite easily, it seems odd that they opted to depict him as such. It plays in to the idea that the film wants to put across to make the premise somewhat more palatable to retarded-religious audiences – sure, they call him a god, the God of Thunder, of course, but he’s not really a god: he’s just a being from a more advanced species, whose technology is so advanced that it would look like magic to the average comic book reader or comic book movie franchise watcher.

Sure it is. And that hammer is just programmed with password-protection which makes it change its mass and weight based on the presence or absence of nobility particles, it doesn’t have a spell on it. And The Destroyer, which sets about destroying bits of a one horse New Mexico town is just a well programmed robot. Yeah, right. Talk about trying to have it both ways. Okay, I will. What was that Supernaut song again, I Like it Both Ways from an age ago? Well I don’t like it both ways, but I can respect the lifestyle choices of other people, and I applaud their flexibility, the fucking indecisive selfish gluttons.

There’s the barest of character arcs in Thor as well, speaking of wanting to have your cake and fuck it too: Thor is sent to Earth to learn humility, or at least respect for other people. When The Destroyer is, er, Destroying things and threatening innocent little New Mexican people’s lives, Thor beseeches the giant thing, telling it to leave those people alone, because their mayfly-like existences have become precious to him. For some reason.

Why? Well, it just happened. For some reason. Because now, in a hurry that would impress a premature ejaculator, Thor not only realises the error of his ways, and now respects human lives, and the rights of fluffy kittens presumably, but he also pledges allegiance presumably to the American flag, in order to pave the way for his involvement in the upcoming Joss Whedon-directed Avengers flick, which, instead of having Steed and Mrs Peel, will have Iron Man and Captain Avenger and the Hulk and other more plausible participants. In some ways this flick amounts to a feature length trailer, ladies and gentlemen, or, should I say, paying suckers.

I paid good money to see this, but I chose not to blight my eyes with the 3D version, instead electing for the old skool 2-dimensional version. Two dimensions are more than adequate for my purposes, really, and I don’t think I missed out on anything. I’m not sure if I really understood what the story was going for in terms of any meaning beyond ‘let’s smash shit up and make a billion dollars’ entirely, but I appreciate what they were trying to do, to some extent. Chris Hemsworth is perfectly adequate in the role, in fact, better than adequate, and I enjoyed watching him striding around manfully and fucking shit up with a wink and a forsooth every now and then.

It’s not a long flick as well, which I appreciated. There’s not much filler there, which is something which predisposes me positively sometimes. I also really liked the Loki character (but then I always did), and the guy playing Heimdal (Idris Elba), being He Who Controls The Rainbow Bridge. Despite having the stupidest headgear since Gary Oldman in that stinker of a Dracula flick, he gets and delivers some good lines. Overall, it’s an amiable and enjoyable comic book movie, rare as that is.

Now there’s just another X-Men flick to look forward to, and Captain America: The First Avenger to look forward to, and The Avengers, and the Green Lantern flick and more Iron Man movies and another Batman flick and the new 3 D Spider-Man flick and - and - and... no further reasons to ever go to a cinema again unless the film is made and approved by some fucking comic book company. ... Jesus, someone just shoot me now, why don’t you...

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